

## ***Special Report***

### **Some of James Crockett's Parting Gifts** **An Investigative Series on the use of Tax Dollars**

This "Special Report" examines what appears to have been a "Gold Watch Sabbatical" awarded to Jim Crockett at the end of his academic career at USM. We also examine some of the details of a Conference trip to Oxford funded by the CoB in late April of 2005.

We first visited the IHL's website and examined the Minutes of the IHL's February of 2004 Meeting, as the insert below indicates:

#### **MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING February 19, 2004**

**BE IT REMEMBERED**, That the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning of the State of Mississippi met in regular session at the Board Office in Jackson, Mississippi, at 8:30 a.m., and pursuant to notice in writing mailed by certified letter with return receipt requested on May 2, 2003, to each and every member of said Board, said date being at least five days prior to this February 19, 2004 meeting. At the above-named place there were present the following members to wit: Mr. Thomas W. Colbert, Mr. William S. Crawford, Dr. Stacy Davidson, Ms. Ricki R. Garrett, Mr. Bryce Griffis, Mr. Roy Klumb, Dr. D. E. Magee, Jr., Dr. Bettye Henderson Neely, Ms. Virginia Shanteau Newton, Mr. Scott Ross, and Ms. Amy Whitten. Mr. Carl Nicholson, Jr. was absent. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Thomas Colbert, President, and opened with prayer by Mr. Roy Klumb.

We scrolled down to the section on personnel issues, and found a list of sabbatical recipients for the eight public institutions of higher learning in the State of Mississippi. What we found for USM in that section was curious, as the insert below details:

#### **MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING February 19, 2004**

##### **PERSONNEL/FOREIGN TRAVEL** Presented by Dr. David Potter, Commissioner

##### **SABBATICAL LEAVE**

**University of Southern Mississippi**  
Crockett, James  
Vest, Michael

We omitted the names of other USM faculty that were awarded sabbatical leaves for brevity, though we do include Michael Vest (Professor of Management) in order to provide a reference point for usmpride.com readers.

This finding is interesting in a number of ways. Crockett retired from USM's CoB after the Spring semester of 2006. He was reportedly serving a period of "phased retirement"

just before the end of this tenure at USM. So, at well past the “11<sup>th</sup> hour” of Crockett’s tenure at USM, he is awarded full pay for a semester (about \$55,000?) without teaching/service responsibilities in order to do what? Research? Readers should note that what is arguably the crown jewel of Crockett’s scholarly career, *Operation Pretense*, was published about one full year *before* the February 2004 IHL Board meeting discussed above, and at a substantial cost to USM (see other reports at [usmpride.com](http://usmpride.com)).

Next, we turn to a trip to Oxford, Mississippi, that Crockett made in late April of 2005. At some point before late April of 2005, Crockett got possession of the following brochure:

# Ole Miss



## CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Eight hours of Continuing Professional Education will be provided.

## HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS

A limited number of hotel rooms are available for conference participants April 28, 29 and 30. If you need reservations, please call Clay C. in the Alumni Office at 662-915-7375.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more information, please contact:

Carol Hopkins  
Patterson School of Accountancy  
The University of Mississippi  
University, MS 38677  
Phone: (662) 915-5756  
Fax: (662) 915-7483  
E-mail: [gcrmh@olemiss.edu](mailto:gcrmh@olemiss.edu)

## Accountancy Weekend

April 28-30, 2005



The University  
of Mississippi



The brochure above announces the dates --- April 28 – 30, 2005 --- of the “Accountancy Weekend” that was held by the Patterson School of Accountancy at Ole Miss, Crockett’s alma mater. Upon gaining receipt of the brochure, Crockett sent Roderick Posey, then Director of SAIS, the following handwritten note:

Posey:  
Will you pay for my travel and registration  
for this?

Jim Crockett

Upon receipt of this note from Crockett, Posey penned the following reply:

I'll be happy to provide  
support.  
Rodney

So, Crockett was off to visit his alma mater for a 3-day Accountancy Weekend in late April of 2005 (was he in phased retirement at this time?). Crockett filled out the application form as seen below:

**REGISTRATION  
FORM**

Ole Miss Accountancy Weekend  
April 28-30, 2005

Please register Early; Limited Seating Available

NAME: James R. (Jim) Crockett

FIRM: USM

STREET: Box 5128

CITY: Hattiesburg STATE: MS ZIP: 39401

PHONE: 601-266-6988

FAX: 601-266-4642

E-MAIL: James.Crockett@USM.edu

**Registration fees:**

Program registration @ \$125 each = \$ 125

(Program registration fee includes  
Friday lunch and reception, instructional  
sessions, materials and refreshment breaks.)

Guest reception 1 @ \$15 each = \$ 15

**Total Due = \$ 140**

Please make checks payable to the Accountancy Alumni Chapter and mail in the envelope provided.

☐ SORRY, I cannot attend the Accountancy Weekend. Enclosed is a registration fee as a contribution to the Accountancy Alumni Chapter.

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From the details on the form above, it appears as though he planned to have his wife accompany him on the 3-day trip.

The details of the 3-day event were provided inside the brochure. As the insert below indicates, the only activity scheduled for Day 1 was an evening Banquet,.

**SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES**

**OTHER WEEKEND EVENTS**

**SCHOOL OF ACCOUNTANCY  
HONORS BANQUET**

*Sponsored by:*  
*Deloitte, E&Y, KPMG & PWC*  
6:00 p.m., Thursday, April 28, 2004  
For information call  
Heather Chance at (662) 915-7676

The accounting/academic portion of the 3-day affair appeared to fall on the second day, April 29. The schedule of events is presented below:

**SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES**

**Friday, April 29, 2005**

**8:00 a.m. REGISTRATION**  
Paul B. Johnson Ballroom

**CONTINUING EDUCATION**

**8:20-10:00 Ethics**  
Reatha Clark  
PricewaterhouseCoopers

**10:00-10:15 BREAK**

**10:15-12:00 FASB Update**  
Ron Lott  
Federal Accounting Standards Board

**12:00-1:00 LUNCH**  
Paul B. Johnson Ballroom

**1:00-2:45 Accounting & Auditing Update**  
Zabi Rezaee  
PCAOB Advisory Board

**2:45-3:00 BREAK**

**3:00-4:45 Tax Update**  
Michael A. Carraway, Jr.  
KPMG

**5:30-7:00 RECEPTION**  
Downtown Grill

**Dress is casual for all events**

The final activity of the second day was a Rock and Roll event, as indicated below:

**LEGENDS OF ROCK AND ROLL**  
Friday, April 29 at 8:00 p.m.  
Ford Center for the Performing Arts  
Tickets: (662) 915-2787 or  
(662) 915-7411  
[www.olemiss.edu/calendar/](http://www.olemiss.edu/calendar/)

As the two exhibits above indicate, this is a rather “thin” academic weekend given that no other sessions were offered beyond the four that are shown above. The 5:30-7:00 Reception that is noted above is presumably the one that Crockett indicated paying an additional fee (guest) for on his application (see above).

What did this trip cost USM? Crockett sought reimbursement for travel and registration only. The e-mail below, from Crockett to Wanda Craft/Crain, indicates that he stayed at his second home in Tula, MS:

Wanda:

Please prepare a travel voucher on this trip for me. I left here at 5:10 p.m. Thursday, April 28 and got back at 12:30 Sunday May 1. Since I stayed at my place at Tula, my only other expenses were 540 miles @ ?.

Tanks,

Jim Crockett

According to mapquest.com, Tula is about 20 miles outside of Oxford. The total cost to USM of Crockett’s April 2005 trip to his second home in Oxford came in at just over \$334 (**USM Employee Travel Voucher #36793**).

But, what about the third day of the Accountancy Weekend? The third day was probably the biggest day of the whole Weekend. As the insert below states, the Oxford Double-Decker Festival at the Courthouse Square took place from 10:00am – 10:00pm that Saturday, April 30, 2005:

**DOUBLE-DECKER FESTIVAL**  
Celebrate music, food, and the arts  
Saturday, April 30, 2005  
10:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.  
Oxford Courthouse Square  
[www.doubledeckerfestival.com](http://www.doubledeckerfestival.com)

This may likely have been the weekend highlight for Crockett’s wife. But for Professor Crockett, other things were planned, beginning with a 9:30am tour of the Ole Miss Rebels’ (then) new Indoor Practice Facility (for football), as shown below:

**TOUR THE INDOOR  
PRACTICE FACILITY**  
Saturday, April 30 at 9:30 a.m.  
Accountancy Weekend registrants  
and their guests will meet at the  
East Entrance of the Indoor Facility

The exhibit below, taken from the Ole Miss Sports official website, shows how impressive the Indoor Practice Facility on the campus in Oxford is:

### Indoor Practice Facility

The Indoor Practice Facility, a jewel in the growing athletics compound surrounding Vaught Hemingway Stadium, opened in the fall of 2004. The 150,000-square-foot structure is a result of UM's Commitment to Excellence in Athletics Campaign, a \$35 million initiative to upgrade the university's athletics programs.

"With the addition of this magnificent indoor facility, we find that Ole Miss athletes and coaches have the opportunity to practice and play games in state-of-the-art facilities, on the finest fields and courts," University of Mississippi Chancellor Dr. Robert Khayat said. "They are in a position of being nationally competitive. As we look forward to finding out what is going to happen in athletics at this university and with the university in general, we can move forward knowing that we have provided the infrastructure and facilities that needed to be provided."

The architects of the facility were Ferguson & Associates of Jackson. The facility includes the following features:



- Top of structure over playing field 79 feet above finished floor
- Building structure comprised of steel frame, metal roof, brick and metal panel exterior walls with dimensional stone base/water table and stone wall caps
- Players' lounge with game room, tv room/lounge, computer/study lab, refreshment bar, and small theater room
- Staff office area features state-of-the-art audio/ video "strategy room" with four digital projection screens and sound
- Staff office area also features state-of-the-art audio/video editing suite
- Banquet Hall to accommodate approximately 300 persons
- Semi-private upstairs Head Coach's Office Suite features private balcony and views into indoor playing field area and towards both the existing outdoor practice fields, and the south end zone of stadium
- New indoor facility is linked to existing stadium via secured, underground tunnel for moving players back and forth between facilities during gamedays
- State-of-the-art training area, including in-ground hydrotherapy pools with submersible treadmills/and video monitoring equipment. Also comprised of tape area, treatment area, rehab area, and hydrotherapy area
- 132 lockers
- Full-sized indoor practice field, including practice track and various related track events
- Staff area/offices include private positional coaches' offices with adjacent team position meeting room.





The day three fun continued on Saturday afternoon, as the insert below from the Ole Miss Accountancy Weekend brochure indicates:

**OLE MISS BASEBALL SERIES**  
Ole Miss v. Mississippi State  
Friday, April 29 at 6:30  
Saturday, April 30 at 4:00  
Sunday, May 1 at 1:30

Ole Miss was hosting the Bulldogs from Mississippi State in a three-game weekend baseball series at Swayze Field (Ole Miss' Swayze Field shown below).



The Ole Miss Sports site indicates that the 2005 season was a remarkable one for Ole Miss, as the following indicates:

Excitement around Rebels baseball has run high the past five seasons under Bianco, as the head coach has led his program to five straight seasons of more than 35 wins each year. Most recently, the Rebels produced 39 wins in 2004 before posting a school-record 48 wins in 2005. That season also saw the Rebels host a second-consecutive NCAA Regional and the school's first Super Regional. Bianco also brought in an SEC Western Division championship, the program's first championship in 23 years.

Just when the Rebels looked to be setting new standards, Ole Miss went out in 2005 and did it again with the second straight NCAA Regional in Oxford that saw Ole Miss claim the Regional Championship and advance to host the program's first-ever Super Regional against the Texas Longhorns.

The 2005 season also saw the second straight Boo Ferriss Award come to Oxford for Brian Pettway, who was also named an All-America selection for the first time in his career. He joined Stephen Head, who became the program's first three-time All-America selection when he earned the All-America distinction again. Head also claimed the first-ever Ferriss Award in the 2004 season.

Crockett's entry at the back of the *2004-05 USM Bulletin* points that he "couldn't lose for winning" during that late April weekend in 2005:

CROCKETT, JAMES R., Professor of Accounting, B.B.A., M.B.A., University of Mississippi; D.B.A., Mississippi State University.

James Crockett, reportedly an avid sports fan, earned two degrees (B.B.A. and M.B.A.) from Ole Miss and one (D.B.A.) from Mississippi State. On Saturday, April 30, 2005, and perhaps even on Sunday, May 1, 2005, he got to watch his two schools (archrivals) fight it out on the baseball diamond, all as part of the 2005 Ole Miss Accountancy Weekend.

### **Brief Commentary**

For last several years of Crockett's tenure at USM, he earned well over \$100,000 per year. This means that his "transition-to-retirement-sabbatical" cost the taxpayers of Mississippi tens of thousands of dollars. With the Accountancy Weekend in Oxford, we again see Crockett take advantage of light-on-the-academics travel opportunities. The April 2005 Oxford trip appears to be more about festivals and baseball games than anything else.

After just a few of these reports on Crockett, this report seems to be another that adds to the idea that Crockett maintained a sense of entitlement about his right to access the State's/USM's coffers. It is this kind of behavior that leads to, and then breaks the back of, a Tier IV university. The contrast between the type of behavior Crockett engaged in with regard to travel (see reports at [usmpride.com](http://usmpride.com)) and Crockett's role as author of a book about corruption is striking.