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The Miami Herald

May 11, 2003

Section Front

Edition Final

Page 1A

## UNION PAID PRIVATE BILLS FOR TORNILLO

JOE MOZINGO AND MANNY GARCIA, [jmozingo@herald.com](mailto:jmozingo@herald.com)

Murray Sisselman, 73 and dying of cancer, walked into the Rascal House deli near his home on Feb. 25 to meet with **James Angleton Jr.**, the chief financial officer of United Teachers of Dade.

Sisselman, who served as UTD president for 27 years, wanted to come clean in his final days. He directed **Angleton** to a file cabinet packed with records showing that longtime union chief Pat Tornillo and his wife were apparently reimbursed for at least \$155,000 in personal expenses in less than three years, including

\* More than \$10,200 during the couple's short stay in St. Bart's and other Caribbean islands covering airfare, meals, hotels, jewelry, French fragrances, cosmetics and swimwear.

\* A five-night stay at The Pierre Hotel in New York City that cost the union \$8,671.98.

\* A \$1,400 spa visit at the Silverado Resort in Napa Valley, Calif.

\* A \$4,158 shopping spree at Silvio Bresciani clothing in New York.

\* \$1,525 in merchandise from Wayside Antiques in Reddick, Fla.

The Herald reviewed 13 months of charges made between 2000 and 2003. They were incurred on two union credit cards and three of Tornillo's personal cards. The bills for all five accounts were submitted to the UTD for payment.

Tornillo, 77, declined to comment Friday evening.

"I'm not going to talk to you," he said.

The discovery could signal the end of Tornillo's four-decade reign over the Southeast's largest labor union, which represents 27,895 teachers and support-staff members. Many of the expenses, UTD financial records show, came when teachers were fighting for raises, facing pay cuts or trying to avoid layoffs.

On Monday, **Angleton** will go public as the insider who began working with federal prosecutors to build a case, when his lawyer delivers papers to the UTD seeking to protect his job under Florida's whistle-blower law.

"I found expenditures submitted by the president and reimbursed by the union that did not appear to be consistent with union or school business," **Angleton** told The Herald.

**Angleton** said the union paid for the Tornillos' home phone bills, power bills, home insurance, grocery bills, Christmas gifts, liquor and more.

### CLOTHING CHARGES

Pat Tornillo charged \$1,032 at Robert Talbott, an upscale men's clothier in Carmel, Calif. He charged \$646 at Bonz, a New Zealand retailer known for its pure wool sweaters. He charged \$1,546.02 at Harry and David, a mail-order supplier of fine fruits and gift baskets. He charged \$2,151.30 for a one-night stay at the Mandarin Oriental in San Francisco.

With each dollar charged to his personal cards, Tornillo collected frequent-flyer miles on American and Delta airlines.

**Angleton** said the union should not have been paying any of Tornillo's expenses - personal or business - because the union boss already received \$40,000 a year to cover such costs, no receipts required.

"When you read everything that is going on and you see certain things, you just can't stomach it," said **Angleton**, who turned records over to federal prosecutors. "I was very concerned for the teachers and the members of the union, and I just didn't see anyone inside I could go to for policing what I saw."

For years, some union members have criticized Tornillo for running the union like his fiefdom, building up the UTD senior staff and executive board with allies.

But the break came from two unlikely sources: Sisselman, who fought side by side with Tornillo to strengthen the teachers union for more than 40 years, and **Angleton**, whom Tornillo hired 16 months ago to be the union's chief financial officer. **Angleton**, 46, previously worked for TotalBank as a senior real-estate lending officer.

Almost from the start, **Angleton** said, he noticed that Tornillo submitted credit-card statements that appeared to contain personal charges. Those invoices were paid, no questions asked, he said.

"There appeared to be no apparent business purpose to them," **Angleton** said. "There were no internal controls, no checks and balances."

**Angleton** said he continued with his own end of the business, mainly dealing with lenders. He didn't have the authority to sign checks or approve expenses.

THE MEETING

Then in February, Sisselman asked **Angleton** to meet him at the Rascal House in Sunny Isles Beach

I'm dealing with my mortality " **Angleton** recalled Sisselman telling him

He worried about all the loss of membership, how would UTD financially sustain its new building and the continued loss of income," **Angleton** said

At their meeting, Sisselman leaned forward and said "Look at Pat's personal expenditures and his credit-card use. Go into the comptroller's room. Go to his expenses. And downrange, I'll tell you to look at other things."

#### DIGGING INTO RECORDS

If there were other secrets, Sisselman took them to his grave. He died March 11, but the tip prompted **Angleton** to dig into the records. What he saw astounded him.

**Angleton** learned that Shirley Johnson, the UTD's secretary treasurer, had co-signed checks with Tornillo to pay off credit-card charges incurred by Tornillo. UTD bylaws mandate that two union officers sign checks. Some checks totaled more than \$10,000.

Shirley is so wonderful, so caring," **Angleton** said. "I was surprised."

**Angleton** said he asked Johnson, "How can you do this?"

Sometimes she would just stare and shake her head," he said. "Other times she would not say anything."

Johnson's attorney, H. T. Smith, said she could not comment during an on-going investigation but had done nothing wrong and plans to cooperate with authorities.

"Dr. Shirley Johnson has not knowingly participated in any illegal or improper conduct," he said. "We are confident that when the dust settles, [she] will be fully vindicated."

UTD spokeswoman Annette Katz said other union executives also would not comment on the expenses.

Sensing that no one in the union shared his concerns, **Angleton** retained Roberto Martinez, the former U.S. attorney for South Florida, and Susan Tarbe, a former federal prosecutor who had supervised the economic crimes unit.

#### HIRE LAWYERS

His goal, he said, was to hire the lawyers to oversee the union, although legally he did not have that authority.

He brought copies of financial records to their Coral Gables office. The former prosecutors took one look and decided that the records needed to be turned over to the U.S. attorney's office in Miami.

Jim's main concern was for the welfare of the teachers and other union members," Tarbe said. "So he had an obligation to turn over the records to authorities and is fully cooperating with them."

**Angleton** was born and raised in Miami, part of a long-established Greek community here. He said he lost sleep over the decision to turn on Tornillo, but said it needed to be done.

"It was the hardest decision I ever had to make in my life," he said. "I've been at the UTD for 16 months. I have an aunt who is a teacher. I grew up in this community, and when you read about all the corruption that's going on, you have to do the right thing."

#### SEARCH WARRANT

Exactly two months after Sisselman's tip, FBI Special Agent Robert Cymbaluk delivered a search warrant to UTD headquarters.

Agents scooped up records from the comptroller's office, along with Tornillo's appointment calendar, his expense reports, reimbursement forms, bills, receipts and credit-card statements - and union payment records.

**Angleton** said he tried to remain calm during the raid, but knew that insiders suspected that he helped bring the government's wrath upon the union.

Now he fears that the union may try to fire him for blowing the whistle. His lawyer said Florida law protects him against any retaliation.

"I have a sincere interest in remaining with the union and going forward to help clean it up and bring back the vitality it once had and the trust it once had with teachers and the community," **Angleton** said.

**Illustration** color photo: Pat Tornilloe (a)

photo: Pat Tornillo with Joe Minor and Pat Siciliano (a)

C M GUERRERO/EL NUEVO FILE UTD PAID: Pat Tornillo, center, shown with Joe Minor and Pat Siciliano, submitted credit-card bills for reimbursement.

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### The Miami Herald

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Page 1B

## LAWYER HIRED TO SOLVE 'CRISIS' IN EMBATTLED TEACHERS UNION

JOE MOZINGO, [jmazingo@herald.com](mailto:jmazingo@herald.com)

The beleaguered United Teachers of Dade moved on Thursday to prevent an exodus of members by appointing a veteran labor lawyer to run the union's day-to-day operations while trying to avoid a financial collapse

Attorney Mark Richard, who has taught at Miami-Dade Community College for 20 years, said he would work with accountants, lawyers and national union administrators to pore through every aspect of the union's finances and restore fiscal stability. "It's a tragedy, folks," he said. "We're in a crisis and the crisis team is on the ground."

Richard, 49, was appointed by the union's umbrella organization, the American Federation of Teachers, which took over the local affiliate shortly after the FBI raided UTD headquarters April 29, looking for evidence that President Pat Tornillo was siphoning union dues for his personal use.

Thursday's appointment happened the same day a UTD whistle-blower who tipped off the FBI with allegations of malfeasance was put on leave without pay.

On Sunday, The Herald documented how the union paid thousands of dollars for Tornillo's personal expenses, including antiques, designer clothing and vacations.

If these reports end up leading to actual charges that ultimately prove to be true, the AFT would consider such behavior on the part of those responsible to be outrageous and reprehensible," said Ed McElroy, secretary treasurer for the AFT, who introduced Richard at a press conference Thursday. The AFT will not tolerate anyone using union finances for personal use."

Richard said he would demand restitution for any misused funds. Teachers are furious. We hope things aren't true, but if they are, we will demand justice."

He said his team would ferret out any mispending - past or present - focusing on union leaders' personal expense accounts and the cost overruns that mounted while building UTD's new headquarters, among other items.

Many of the financial problems were brought to light by James Angleton Jr., the UTD's chief financial officer, who went to the FBI.

Angleton said the union put him on unpaid leave Thursday, a move his lawyers call retaliation.

Instead of ferreting out wrongdoing, the union hurt the very person who took a stand to clean things up," said attorney Susan Tarbe.

McElroy said the AFT had been concerned about the local's financial state since January, when the 27,895-member UTD asked the national group to co-sign a \$2.8 million loan.

"We never approved the loan guarantee because we never received a number of answers to questions that we had requested concerning the finances of the UTD and their ultimate ability to repay the loan," McElroy said. In fact, the more we studied the UTD's fiscal situation over the next few months, the more we considered that we might have to put the union under an administratorship."

The raid and the investigation into Tornillo ultimately prompted them to do so.

Thursday evening, Richard was discussing whether to suspend Tornillo without pay, union officials said. Since the raid, he has been on paid leave.

To lead the restructuring effort, the AFT hired a man who has dedicated much of his life to the labor movement.

Richard started as an organizer in Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers. In 1987, he represented flight attendants during the Eastern Airlines strike, and this year was a legal advisor to flight attendants during the restructuring negotiations at American Airlines.

He grew up in Miami, was a product of the Miami-Dade public education system, and led the push to unionize faculty at Miami-Dade Community College.

"Every educator knows they need a union," he said. "Over the last 40 years, UTD has played an important role in integrating our schools, has fought for smaller class size and worked for higher standards of student achievement."

But since the raid, 275 members have left the union, school officials said.

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### The Miami Herald

May 18, 2003  
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Page 24A

## TWO UNION INSIDERS SAY STRAPPED UTD BORROWED FROM THEM

MANNY GARCIA AND JOE MOZINGO, [mozingo@herald.com](mailto:mozingo@herald.com)

Finances got so bleak at the United Teachers of Dade last year that two top union insiders lent money to their employer - and made a profit on the deals James Angleton Jr and David J. Albaum - who turned government witnesses in the federal probe of union boss Pat Tornillo - said they each lent the union between \$100,000 and \$150,000. They said they charged 10 percent interest for the unsecured loans, done in two installments between last August and December. "I made like \$600," Angleton said. "It was for a very short time."

Albaum said he could not remember how much he earned.

Both said they could not remember exact figures for the loans, nor could they provide the loan documents.

### FBI RAID

But the arrangement has raised concern among lawyers hired by the UTD after an FBI raid at union headquarters on April 29, when agents carted off financial records and other items related to Tornillo's travels and tenure as union boss.

Neither the attorneys nor union officials would comment for this report.

Angleton, 46, and Albaum, 50, were barred from the building Tuesday. Albaum, the union's in-house financial consultant, has not returned since. Angleton, the union's chief financial officer, met with UTD officials Thursday and was relieved of duty without pay.

Union officials say they didn't need Angleton anymore because the American Federation of Teachers took over the local's finances after the raid.

"It's not retribution," UTD spokeswoman Annette Katz said. "If you have other people doing all of your finances, it would be duplication of services."

Lawyers for both men say their clients were barred from the office because they went to law enforcement.

"I'm disappointed that a fellow who has come forward seems to be targeted by the union," said Albaum's attorney, Thomas Spencer.

Tornillo hired Angleton to be the UTD's chief financial officer about 18 months ago. Angleton joined the union from TotalBank, where he helped UTD obtain a construction loan. Angleton then hired Albaum to be the union's financial consultant. The two men have been friends and business associates for 15 years.

### EXPLANATION OF LOANS

Albaum said the loans were needed in part because Tornillo's extravagant credit-card charges were draining the UTD's operating fund, especially during the summer months and Christmas season when the School Board does not forward union dues to the UTD. The school system is entrusted with deducting the dues from paychecks.

With the union still short of money over Christmas, Angleton called on a longtime friend, attorney Richard Krinzman, who said he lent the union \$100,000 - at 17 percent interest.

Albaum said the loans were made so the UTD would not have to obtain a conventional loan that could affect its credit score at a time when the union was trying to secure a mortgage for the UTD building on Biscayne Boulevard.

Angleton said Tornillo and union Secretary-Treasurer Shirley Johnson approved the notes, along with an outside union lawyer, Gary Smith, who drafted the paperwork. Smith was out of town Friday and could not be reached.

### REASONABLE RATE

All of this information and the loan documents were provided to government investigators before the raid, said Angleton's attorney, Roberto Martinez. "It was for a reasonable interest rate, and it was prepared by an outside law firm."

Krinzman said the union began repaying him in March and finished in April - just before FBI agents raided the union.

"I'm happy," he said.

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### The Miami Herald

May 18, 2003  
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## UNION PAID FOR CHIEF'S OPULENT LIFESTYLE

*MANNY GARCIA AND JOE MOZINGO, jmozingo@herald.com*

On the morning of Nov. 19, 2002, United Teachers of Dade President Pat Tornillo excoriated school leaders over low teacher salaries and demanded a hunt for spare dollars that could go toward raises.

But Tornillo himself wasn't so frugal. That night, he spent teachers union dues to stay in a \$2,000-a-night suite at the Mandarin Oriental hotel at Brickell Key. Tornillo slept eight nights at the opulent hotel and charged it to a UTD credit card.

Total cost: \$20,138.53

I went ballistic when I

saw that Mandarin bill," said David J. Albaum, the union's in-house financial consultant, who reviewed the UTD's credit-card statements. "A \$2,000 room for a nonprofit union? Come on."

Tornillo's spending is at the center of a federal grand jury investigation to determine whether the longtime union boss spent teachers' dues on personal luxuries.

Tornillo referred calls Friday to his attorney, Robert Josefsberg, who did not return three calls seeking comment.

The Herald obtained 21 months' worth of the UTD chief's credit-card statements, union checks and financial records that show the union paid credit-card charges totaling at least \$350,000 between September 2000 and this March, with little or no scrutiny. Among the charges:

The Sinclair Intimacy Institute - whose motto is "Better Relationships, Better Sex" - Bed Bath & Beyond, Target, ABC Liquor, Sharper Image, even the historic Ahwahnee hotel in Yosemite National Park in California.

From the Neiman Marcus catalog, the 77-year-old Tornillo bought a pair of python-print pajamas (\$175.73) and a matching robe (\$149.10).

Pat and Donna Tornillo globe-hopped, often first class, through Australia, New Zealand, Europe and the Far East. Pat Tornillo charged \$1,441 worth of tailored suits in Hong Kong and \$978.26 in souvenirs in Thailand. Donna Tornillo, 56, charged \$1,800 worth of designer clothing in one day in New York. The couple charged almost \$4,000 at a jewelry store in Carmel, Calif.

Teachers' dues paid for it all, which Albaum said left the union so cash-strapped that it had to take out loans just to get by.

"We paid all his bills," said Albaum, who reviewed outgoing payments, but admitted that he never confronted Tornillo. "We paid Southern Bell, the cable company, FPL. He didn't try to hide anything."

### FIGHTING FOR SALARIES

Many of the expenditures, UTD records show, came at a time when teachers were fighting for raises, facing pay cuts or trying to avoid layoffs.

Last November, Tornillo sat across from Miami-Dade County Schools Superintendent Merrett Sterheim and demanded pay raises for teachers and protection from layoffs for teachers' aides. He insisted that new salaries be retroactive, warning that he would negotiate "until hell freezes over."

"No longer are we willing to accept that you don't have money," Tornillo told the school district's negotiating team.

Later, Tornillo retreated to the Biscayne Bay Suite at the Mandarin, costing \$2,000 a night. High over the bay, the 960-square-foot unit features bamboo floors, a marble open shower, a deep-soaking tub and floor-to-ceiling windows offering guests an unparalleled view of Miami. That night, Tornillo charged \$84 worth of beverages from the in-room bar.

During his eight-day stay, Tornillo regularly ordered room service, used the bar, had clothes laundered, and lounged in the spa.

He checked out on Nov. 23, charging it to a UTD American Express card.

His rental apartment is just 300 yards away.

Albaum said Tornillo caught so much grief over the Mandarin bill that he wrote the union a personal check to cover the charges. Albaum said that several weeks later, UTD bookkeeper Judy Bowling issued Tornillo a check to pay him back.

"I saw the check," Albaum said. "It was for the same amount of the Mandarin charge. He turned around and had Judy B. reimburse it."

Bowling declined repeated requests for comment.

The Mandarin charge, records show, was not the only indulgence. On Sept. 24, 2000, Pat and Donna Tornillo jetted to San Francisco, then to Australia, New Zealand and back to California.

They visited the world-renowned aquarium in Sydney and bought \$332 in women's clothing the next day. In the New Zealand mountain resort of Queenstown, they charged \$852 at the Bonz Gallery and \$487 at the Queenstown Gallery of fine art. In California, they landed in San Francisco and drove to Carmel, where they strolled among the town's famous cypresses and spent \$1,310.94 on Christmas collectibles at Kns Krngle and \$3,900 for a necklace and gold ring at Concepts Jewelry.

Their next stop down the Pacific Coast Highway was the Post Ranch Inn in Big Sur. The cost on his corporate credit card: \$4,279.87 for a few nights' stay.

The Tornillos drove back to San Francisco to end their vacation at the Bay Area's Mandarin Oriental, where they racked up a \$7,306.24 bill.

The three-week vacation cost at least \$49,715 - equivalent to the annual salary of a schoolteacher with 15 years of experience and a master's degree. In terms of the union, it cost the annual dues of 59 teachers.

The following year, the Tornillos jetted off to Switzerland, India, Thailand and Cambodia for a two-week vacation that cost at least \$27,000, union records show. In its review of union checks for that trip, The Herald could not confirm that every expense was covered by the union, although much of it was placed on corporate credit cards.

Overall for this report, The Herald reviewed about \$444,000 in credit-card expenses with \$350,000 in corresponding checks.

Albaum said the union paid all of the expenses. He said Tornillo simply turned in his monthly statements to Bowling to be paid.

Albaum acknowledged that he approved many of the checks. He never confronted Tornillo and never told the executive board during its monthly meetings. His explanation: Tornillo demeaned people. He'd tell them, "Get outta here."

Albaum said the board never questioned Tornillo either. In one financial report prepared for the board, Tornillo's spending is listed under a line item: Community Affairs and Organizational Relations.

Albaum said he showed the charges to UTD Secretary-Treasurer Shirley Johnson, who expressed concern.

"I thought it was her job to do," he said. She said she would talk to Pat and even went to lunch with Mrs. Tornillo on Jan. 28 to talk about the spending.

On Jan. 17, Johnson sent an angry e-mail to Tornillo, claiming that her signature was being stamped on checks that she had never seen or approved. All union checks required both Johnson's and Tornillo's signatures.

Johnson wrote that she had met with Albaum, Bowling and James Angleton Jr., the UTD's chief financial officer, about using our signature stamps and stamping both of our names on checks we never see or sign.

"I sent an e-mail eight months ago about this and was very disturbed to find out that my e-mail was ignored and this is still going on," she wrote.

Neither Johnson nor her attorney, H. T. Smith, would comment for this report. Albaum recalled the meeting and said Bowling was the one who used the stamps.

Albaum joined the UTD 18 months ago at the request of Angleton, his friend for 15 years. Angleton - who knew that the union was hemorrhaging money - says he was tipped off to the questionable billing on Feb. 25 by Tornillo's longtime colleague Murray Sisselman, the former union president who died of cancer several weeks later.

Albaum and Angleton have become government witnesses in the probe of Tornillo.

#### MOTIVES QUESTIONED

Union officials and their attorneys question the pair's motives in going to the FBI, which led to the investigation. They say Angleton, as the chief financial officer, was in a prime position to know about the union's spending - and do something about it - long before his meeting with Sisselman. None of the officials or attorneys would be quoted for this report.

On Sunday, The Herald reported that Angleton turned over to authorities records showing that Tornillo and his wife charged at least \$155,000 for personal items, including antiques, a St. Bart's vacation, California spa visits, custom clothing, even groceries.

Tornillo earns \$243,000 a year in salary and benefits. That includes a \$42,700 stipend that is supposed to cover his business expenses, Angleton said.

UTD spokeswoman Annette Katz declined to say whether Tornillo has a contract that covers his personal expenditures. She also refused to provide a list of union-related trips that Tornillo took.

On April 29, FBI agents raided UTD headquarters and hauled off all the credit-card statements, expense reports, Tornillo's appointment calendar and more. Tornillo then took a leave of absence.

Three days after the raid, Albaum said, Tornillo returned to UTD headquarters with a stack of personal expenses.

"Tornillo wanted us to pay the phone bill," Albaum said.

**Illustration** color photo headshot of Pat Tornillo (a)

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### The Miami Herald

August 17, 2003

Section Front

Edition Final

Page 1A

## LEADERS OF UTD SAW CRISIS, KEPT SILENT

MATTHEW I. PINZUR, [mpinzur@herald.com](mailto:mpinzur@herald.com)

Six months before the Miami-Dade teachers unions crisis became public, its three top leaders knew the union was in a fiscal free-fall but never warned thousands of teachers, according to interviews and documents obtained by The Herald.

While the United Teachers of Dade was bleeding cash and borrowing millions to stay afloat, senior staff members were still planning construction of condominiums and a 20-story office tower.

Teachers, meanwhile, sat in frustration as the union failed to win pay increases, failed to stop skyrocketing insurance costs, and failed to elect candidates it backed in key local and state elections.

By the time FBI agents raided union headquarters April 29 - investigating longtime leader Pat Tornillo for spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on personal luxuries - the chief financial officer was consulting a bankruptcy attorney.

"The budget was fictional, and UTD was paying out more money than it was taking in," according to the minutes of the union's executive board two weeks after the FBI raid. UTD [took out] a series of bad loans with a very high rate of interest, which essentially you [dig] a hole deeper and deeper and eventually you cannot get out of the situation."

Both the union's rational parent, the American Federation of Teachers, and rank-and-file teachers are eager to retrace the UTD's financial breakdown - partially to prevent a repeat, but also to place blame on anybody who dragged the union down.

The union's lawyers say they may sue anyone who negligently allowed money to be misspent.

"The scope of what we're looking at goes beyond just who may have taken money they weren't entitled to," said Michael Pasano, a former federal prosecutor now representing the UTD.

Forensic auditors hired by the AFT are trying to reconstitute the union's convoluted books. They have learned that Tornillo and his top lieutenants - Secretary-Treasurer Shirley Johnson and Chief Financial Officer **James Angleton** - watched the UTD decay for at least six months, according to documents and interviews.

As far back as last October, the union had so little operating cash that it was surviving on its members' insurance premiums, holding them for four to six weeks before sending them in.

"I am very sorry we are faced with the present-day scenario," Angleton wrote in an Oct. 16 memo to Johnson and Tornillo. "It is a necessity of life right now."

E-mails among the three officials grew more heated and desperate through the fall, and dozens of messages illustrate the wrangling as they attempted to fend off banks and pay dues to their state and national affiliates.

#### BOARD NOT INQUISITIVE

Members didn't request

more financial information

The union's executive board - 22 full-time teachers and school staff members who are supposed to oversee the UTD - was apparently ignorant of the problem. A year's worth of minutes from its meetings included scant mention of finances.

"We felt that we did not know a great deal about what was going on in our own union," said John Maher, a board member and science teacher at Killian Senior High School.

Board minutes, however, make no mention of members ever asking for more information, even though financial oversight was part of their responsibility. Nor do the minutes mention any objections when the board stopped receiving quarterly budget updates after the August 2002 meeting.

"There wasn't a great deal of decision-making going on at the board level," said Maher, who has been on the board for two years. "I feel very much like I've let the membership down."

Neither Tornillo nor his attorney returned calls seeking comment, although Tornillo has previously maintained his innocence. Johnson and Angleton blame Tornillo - and each

other - for failing to inform the board

Both came into Tornillo's inner circle in recent years but neither had the clout to seriously challenge his plans, union insiders said

Tornillo hired **Angleton** as chief financial officer on Aug. 6, 2001 - two weeks before the board even approved creation of the position. **Angleton** was supposed to advise Tornillo and Johnson on budget operations, including audits and banking.

He became the person who occasionally delivered financial information to the board, including budgets and quarterly updates, according to meeting minutes. But because he reported only to Tornillo and Johnson, he said he did not feel obligated to alert board members to the growing problems.

"Not one of those executives of the board ever called me, ever walked into my office on UTD business," **Angleton** said in a phone interview. "When I saw they didn't ask any business questions and none of them cared enough to ask how things were - how can you go to them?"

#### FINANCIAL OFFICER OUT

Secretary-treasurer upset

about erosion of authority

When **Angleton** reported Tornillo's spending to the FBI, he became a union pariah and was placed on unpaid leave by the AFT, which took over the local chapter and said it did not need a local financial chief.

Unlike **Angleton**, Johnson did report to the board. But she complained to Tornillo that her authority over finances had been usurped by **Angleton**, according to e-mails.

Officially the union's second in command, she was relegated to overseeing scholarship programs, teacher awards and member recruitment, board minutes show.

By January, she was e-mailing Tornillo to complain that **Angleton** and other staff members were stamping her signature on checks without her approval.

"I do plan to carry out my responsibilities as defined in the [UTD] constitution," she wrote on Jan. 17.

**Angleton** said the stamp was used by only the UTD comptroller and that she used it for only routine items such as the 300 to 500 weekly checks sent to make payroll, pay vendors and meet other expenses. Hand signatures would be unwieldy, he said, especially when Tornillo and Johnson were out of the office.

Even after Johnson complained, he said, she still allowed her stamp to be used - she simply required her aide to use it instead of the comptroller.

Johnson's attorney, H.T. Smith, said the stamp was only one symbol of the way Tornillo and **Angleton** effectively stripped her of all responsibility for money management. She had been so marginalized that on April 8, three weeks before the raid, she offered to resign in an e-mail to Tornillo.

"I can no longer operate with a CFO in control of the financial decisions," she wrote. "I find this unacceptable and against everything that I believe and hoped to achieve at UTD."

All this intrigue was kept in back rooms, though, and board minutes give no suggestion that the members were aware of the schism or the financial distress.

A number of board members said they asked for more-detailed financial information but never received it.

"We got promises we would get these types of reports, but we never did," Maher said.

When **Angleton** learned of Tornillo's regal spending, he said he reported it directly to the FBI because he believed that the board was stacked with Tornillo loyalists.

"I think they would have done me in, and this would never have come out," he said.

Several board members conceded they had deep faith in Tornillo, who led the union for more than 40 years.

"Over these decades there was a tremendous feel of trust between the board and the higher-ups," said Sandy Bearman, a 23-year veteran of the board who teaches at North Miami Beach Senior High School.

But even within the board, there were members uncomfortable with the unflinching fealty toward Tornillo. Board member Nancy Benouach, a teacher at Citrus Grove Middle School, said she first noticed it when she raised questions about the union paying for Tornillo's home.

"If looks could kill, I was dead," she said.

The board was aware of a general downturn in the union's membership and therefore its revenue. In January, more than 400 members quit in a 10-day span, according to an **Angleton** e-mail, bringing the UTD roster below 15,000.

"Anybody connected with UTD in any type of role knew we were losing members and knew things were tight," Maher said. "Obviously, we did not know the extent of our financial instability."

#### SURPRISING DISCOVERY

Takeover of the union led

to the financial revelations

At the same time, Tornillo was planning dramatic new projects - development of condominiums in the Brickell area and a massive office tower near the UTD's new headquarters. **Angleton** and Tornillo sparred over whether to begin the risky ventures or sell the vacant land immediately.

Both projects died when the AFT took control and discovered how convoluted the UTD's business and accounting practices were. Forensic auditors on the job since early May are just beginning to understand it, AFT General Manager Mike Benner said.

Other financial repair is also under way. The AFT laid off staff members, cut salaries and abandoned plans to open charter schools. Space in the headquarters may be leased or the building sold outright.

"We are financially heading toward stability," said Mark Richard, the head of another AFT union who is now also overseeing the UTD. "We are literally taking back our union."

**Illustration photo:** Pat Tornillo (a), Shirley Johnson (a), **James Angleton** (a)

AL DIAZ/HERALD FILE FORMER UTD LEADER Pat Tornillo steps aside last November after his personal spending of union funds resulted in an investigation.

TIM CHAPMAN/HERALD FILE SECRETARY-TREASURER Shirley Johnson, a high UTD official, complained her role was eroded.

ALEX KOLYER/HERALD FILE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER **James Angleton** reported Pat Tornillo's spending to the FBI.

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## AUDIT OF FUNDS LIKELY TO IMPLICATE SECOND-IN-COMMAND, WIDOW SAYS

*JOE MOZINGO, [jmazingo@herald.com](mailto:jmazingo@herald.com)*

It wasn't just Pat and Donna Tornillo who took lavish trips around the world on teachers' dollars

Murray Sisselman, Pat Tornillo's longtime second in command at the United Teachers of Dade, did too

So says his wife, Lu, who enjoyed union-paid vacations - Mediterranean cruises, languid days on St. Barthélemy, tours of Russia - with her husband over more than 20 years.

Murray always told me they were one of his perks," she told The Herald. He said there was a travel fund."

Sisselman, 57, said she is bracing for the results of a forensic audit of the union that is expected to show that her late husband, president of the UTD for 27 years, misused teachers' dues himself - though not to the great extent exhibited by Pat Tornillo.

On Thursday she received a letter from union attorneys noting unspecified "irregularities" and putting her on notice that the union may lay claim to her husband's estate. Auditors are conducting their investigation in several stages, and as they find money that has been misappropriated, teams of lawyers will be seeking restitution and any legal avenues to get the money back," said newly named UTD administrator Mark Richard.

Sisselman at least partially acknowledged her husband's misdeeds. He took the free vacations, often with the Tornillos. He helped drive the effort to build a new headquarters - now seen as a fiasco that nearly bankrupted the union. And he knew about the Tornillos' vast spending but never took it to the board of stewards or law enforcement.

He ended up being an enabler," Lu Sisselman said. He should have done something."

Murray Sisselman was also slotted to get a \$406,355 golden parachute from a secret reserve fund that top UTD officials set up in the event that Tornillo and his regime were voted out of office, records show. Sisselman never got the money. The union had to drain the fund to pay for cost overruns on the new headquarters.

### CLOUDING OF LEGACY

The upcoming audit threatens to cloud the legacy Murray Sisselman left when he died of cancer in March at age 73, as an unbending advocate for teachers who worked directly with members while Tornillo became the UTD's public face, courting politicians, power brokers and TV cameras.

Murray was the guy who'd take phone calls from teachers at midnight on a Sunday," his wife said. He was dyed-in-the-wool union man."

One of his accomplishments was a program for teachers to get master's degrees at Nova Southeastern University.

As part of the arrangement, Nova paid the union a fee for teachers who signed up. According to prosecutors and records reviewed by The Herald, that money became a slush fund for Tornillo to pay his credit card bills and other personal expenses.

The U.S. attorney's office said Tornillo repeatedly cashed checks as large as \$15,000 to himself from the Nova account. Tornillo pleaded guilty on Monday to federal counts of tax evasion and mail fraud, stemming from an investigation of his misuse of union funds. The charges included just six years of illegal activity. He's expected to serve two years in prison.

### MORE MODEST PROFILE

There is no indication that Sisselman took home the hundreds of thousands of dollars that Tornillo admitted taking.

Sisselman died in a modest home in North Miami Beach, whereas Tornillo has several homes - a posh condo on Brickell Key, a spacious brick home in Tallahassee and a beach house on St. George Island in North Florida.

Ironically, it was Sisselman's own near-death revelation that set off events that now threaten to tarnish his hard work. Apparently fed up with Tornillo's flagrant spending, Sisselman told the union's chief financial officer, **James Angleton Jr.**, to look into the matter, according to **Angleton**.

**Angleton** did and took what he found to the U.S. attorney's office, which launched its investigation in March and raided UTD headquarters in April. The resulting scandal prompted the union's umbrella organization, the American Federation of Teachers, to conduct the forensic audit.

Lu Sisselman said auditors probably will find that she and Murray took first-class cruises around the Baltic Sea, through the Greek Isles, up the rugged coast of Turkey and vacations in Jamaica and St. Barthélemy, Europe and Russia.

The Sisselmans and Tornillos often booked their junkets through a travel agency owned by the UTD's attorney, Elizabeth Du Fresne, records show. Union sources say auditors are now focusing on her business - whose address was listed at the old UTD headquarters. Du Fresne did not return calls seeking comment.

Looking back, Lu Sisselman, a teacher for 28 years and longtime UTD member, said she worried about who was paying for the vacations  
"I never felt comfortable with the trips," she said. Murray would say, "Look, don't worry about it."

**Illustration** color photo Murray Sisselman (a)

**RATIONALE** Murray Sisselman said vacations funded by United Teachers of Dade were a job perk, his widow says

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Section Neighbors BC

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## COUNCIL TO APPOINT A NEW MEMBER

ALDO NAHED, [anahed@herald.com](mailto:anahed@herald.com)

When the Bay Harbor Islands Town Council meets Wednesday for a special meeting to appoint a new council member, it will choose from among five candidates

The applicants are **James Angleton Jr** the former chief financial officer of United Teachers of Dade who now heads a golf tournament company Ralph Conti, president of Conti & Associates Development, Adam Feinstein, director of Cushman & Wakefield's Financial Services Group, attorney Jonathan Levy, and Alberto Ruder, the city of Miami's former Parks and Recreation director now retired

The candidates responded to a call for applications for an opening created when Councilwoman Jill Serfaty submitted her resignation July 9 after she sold her house and moved to Hollywood

Whoever is appointed Wednesday will finish Serfaty's term, which ends in April

According to the town's charter, the town council must appoint a new member within 60 days or hold special elections

At least four votes of the council, which currently has six members, are required for the appointment The seat pays \$1 a year

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**Edition** Broward

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### AROUND SOUTH FLORIDA

*From Herald Staff and Wire Service Reports*

Teachers' union sues 2 over '03 financial crisis

The United Teachers of Dade on Tuesday sued two former executives, accusing them of professional negligence in the 2003 financial crisis that brought the massive union to the brink of bankruptcy

The suit blames former chief financial officer **James Angleton Jr.** and financial consultant David Albaum for failing to report a yearslong scheme that allowed top union officials to pilfer millions of dollars in union dues

The UTD scandal led to a plea-bargained federal conviction and 27-month prison sentence for long-time union boss Pat Tornillo, who financed lavish vacations and a luxurious personal life from the UTD budget

**Angleton** blew the whistle on Tornillo, cooperating with federal investigators. The UTD suit, however, said **Angleton** only did so to protect himself when he could no longer cover up a financial crisis he helped create

#### HIALEAH

#### FIREFIGHTERS' AD

#### BASHES THE MAYOR

A billboard that bashes Hialeah Mayor Raul Martinez greets drivers on Okeechobee Road - compliments of city firefighters

The billboard reads "Welcome to Hialeah," with a photograph of Martinez surrounded by bags of money. Beside him are four firefighters in bunker gear, with one of them faded out, symbolizing the department's shortage of employees, low pay and poor working conditions

Firefighters want more personnel and annual pay increases comparable to their colleagues in nearby departments. They paid \$8,000 for the billboard, union representatives said.

#### HOMESTEAD

#### STUDENTS PROTEST

#### PRINCIPAL'S REMOVAL

Hundreds of students at Homestead Senior High School walked out of class Tuesday protesting the removal of Principal Timothy Dawson

More than 10 percent of the school's 3,200 students participated in the protest. They returned to class after 20 to 30 minutes.

"I removed the principal after receiving a number of specific complaints from students, teachers and parents and after visiting the school myself last week," Miami-Dade Schools Superintendent Rudy Crew told the School Board.

Dawson was embroiled in a scandal in 1998 when, as principal of Kilian Senior High School, he ordered the arrest and expulsion of nine students for producing an obscenity-laced pamphlet called The First Amendment.

#### MIAMI

#### HIGH COURT TO RULE

#### ON HAITIAN'S DUI CASE

The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday heard arguments in the case of a Haitian man who was deported because immigration officials said his drunken-driving conviction in Miami was a crime of violence that required his removal.

Josue Leocal injured another driver in January 2000. He pleaded guilty to DUI and served two years in jail and then was deported. His wife and four children, all U.S. citizens, remain in the United States.

Leocal's attorney Wick Sollers argued that there needed to be some intent to use violence.

"How is this any different from someone shooting blindly into a building?" asked Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. "Getting behind the wheel when drunk and turning the keys is an intentional use of force that poses a substantial risk."

The court is expected to decide the case by June.

DEAL MAY BE NEAR  
IN 'GOLD TRAIN' CASE

The U.S. government and a group of Hungarian Jews have made "substantial progress" toward settling a 3-year-old dispute over the Holocaust survivors' demands to be compensated for valuables stolen near the end of World War II, lawyers for both sides said Tuesday in Miami.

The ongoing mediation has shown so much promise that U.S. District Judge Patricia Seitz postponed a hearing scheduled for today.

Near the end of the war, the Nazis and their Hungarian collaborators stole Persian rugs, gold, jewelry, paintings and other valuables. After the Allied victory, the U.S. Army found the Gold Train - 40 carloads of looted items. The U.S. government sold much of the property at auction for refugee relief.

The Hungarian Jews' suit seeks up to \$10,000 each for as many as 30,000 plaintiffs.

MIAMI BEACH

PROSECUTOR CERTAIN  
OF 1976 MURDER CASE

A prosecutor says he is confident the state can win its case against a woman arrested last week for a 1976 Miami Beach bar slaying.

Lynn Smith, 51, of Standish, Maine, was arrested Friday at her home. She appeared in Portland District Court on Tuesday, but there was no decision on whether she would fight extradition. She was held without bail.

In Miami, Assistant State Attorney Joshua Gradinger said a check through old files and a visit to the crime scene assured him of a successful prosecution.

Gradinger said Smith, then 28, was drinking at Howe's Bar in Miami Beach on Dec. 11, 1976, when, according to witnesses, she attacked a man who had walked into the bathroom she was using. When Elbert McKenzie, another bar patron, grabbed her shoulder, Smith stabbed him in the belly, Gradinger said.

Smith was charged with second-degree murder and released on bail. She failed to appear in court for her trial on Feb. 3, 1978.

SOUTH MIAMI-DADE  
PANEL DECANTS LAW  
TO OK WINEMAKING

A committee of the Miami-Dade County Commission approved an ordinance Tuesday that would allow winemaking in Redland and Southwest Dade, and sent the measure to the full commission for a final vote next week.

Commissioner Dennis Moss pushed for the change, citing the tourism possibilities of wineries.

At least two wineries make tropical-fruit wines in Miami-Dade and are awaiting approval to begin sales.

**Illustration** photo: Timothy Dawson (a), LynnSmith (a)

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