

July 20, 1998

Honorable Jack Lewis
Municipal Court Judge
P.O. Box 368
Clinton, AR 72031

RE: Case 97-294

Dear Judge Lewis:

At a Probable Cause Hearing on July 17, 1998, the Judicial Discipline and Disability Commission reviewed a sworn complaint, your response to that sworn complaint, the results of its investigation, and your sworn testimony before the Commission. This letter concerns the allegations that on August 20, 1997 you issued a citation to show cause to Judy Gipson why she should not be held in criminal contempt of court for posting on the door of your office written matters and publicly distributing materials which were used as part of a conspiracy to "railroad" Gary Gipson, a convicted felon.

The written matters that was posted on the door to your office in part said that your daughter Cassandra Lewis was responsible for causing Judy Gipson's husband to be convicted of sexually abusing two girls. The letter states your daughter's motives were spite, meanness and jealousy and that at one point your daughter threatened complainant's husband by saying "I'm going to get you". The written matters stated that your daughter coached the girls into going to the police and lying about the incident. A police investigation was conducted. Later at a criminal trial Judy Gipson's husband was convicted and sentenced to jail. The written matters stated in part that "this whole thing is not more than a sham. Gary (Gipson) has not been given a fair trial....Because of Cassandra's jealousy she has manipulation the girls and used her 'good old boy' status in the community, her father, Judge Jack Lewis, and the whole system against Gary and we had absolutely no power to do a thing about it."

After becoming aware of the posting of the written materials, you issued the show cause citation and later presided at the show cause hearing. You then found Judy Gipson guilty of criminal contempt of court. You sentenced her to 90 days in jail and a fine of \$1500. During the hearing, you indicated that you would reconsider Judy Gipson's sentence if she would tell you who helped her write the petition. After being told no one had helped her, you stated that you did not believe Judy Gipson and that she had been put up to this by a faction.

The Commission found that under the circumstances of this case as described above, your actions denigrated the public confidence of the judiciary, was inconsistent with maintaining the high standards of conduct essential in preserving the integrity of the judiciary and created the appearance of an impropriety. This constitutes a violation of Canons 2B and 3E(1) (a) of the Code of Judicial Conduct. It is the judgment of the Commission that you be and are hereby admonished.

This public admonition constitutes adequate discipline and no further action is warranted. The Commission indulges in the expectation that this conduct will not be repeated.

This Commission action is public information.

BY DIRECTION OF THE COMMISSION:

James A. Badami
Executive Director

cc: Judy Gipson

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