



Mickey P. Rowe

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Governor Bill Richardson  
Office of the Governor  
490 Old Santa Fe Trail  
Room 400  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA 93106-5060

May 30, 2008

Dear Governor Richardson,

On March 26<sup>th</sup>, I wrote to your office asking you to investigate the conduct of Stuart Ashman with regards to complaints of unethical behavior by Spencer Lucas and others at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science. I am disappointed that no one in your office took the time to respond to my letter. I am even more disappointed that, so far as I can tell, your office has done absolutely nothing to censure Mr. Ashman or anyone else involved in this affair. As I wrote to you previously, I sincerely believe that you and your state would be well-served if you were to seek Mr. Ashman's resignation. I do not make this recommendation lightly. I have never before sought to have someone dismissed. I am writing to you a second time because Mr. Ashman is continuing to embarrass your state in public comments about these incidents. If you do not at least release some form of statement indicating your displeasure with Mr. Ashman's words and actions over the past year then you might as well hold a press conference and say, "you're doing a heckuva job, Ashy".

As you are probably aware, the Executive Committee of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology has recently released a report detailing their investigation of the accusations against Lucas and his colleagues. The committee that performed the investigation does not have a mandate for such investigations, and largely as a consequence of that they chose to step lightly and produce a tepid report. As I understand the chain of events, one of the reasons they chose to investigate was because the committee members agreed that Ashman had so spectacularly failed to provide the oversight that he should have. The report (which can be found at: <http://www.vertpaleo.org/society/documents/ExecutiveCommitteestatement.pdf>) states:

We expect reviews of professional conduct to be unbiased and free of conflicts of interest (real or apparent), regardless of whether they are performed by professional societies, employers or editors. The review by the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science of the complaints leveled by Martz and Parker was conducted in part by scientists who had prior association with the accused, which made the conclusions of that review appear less than objective and did little to resolve the issues in a satisfactory way.

Like the rest of the report, this quote is rather understated. In a statement to the committee and released to *The Albuquerque Journal*, Mr. Ashman responds:

there is no doubt in my mind that the professionals that we appointed to this committee brought an impartial orientation to their work.

Please inject some doubt into his mind. Or explain to me how a rational person could read Norman Silberling's contribution as impartial. His letter is nothing short of vindictive as you can see from a quote

that has made him infamous on the web (the full letter is here:  
<http://www.abqjournal.com/news/pdf/silberling.pdf>):

it's apparent that an interconnected group of mainly young, un- or under-employed workers (including both Parker and Martz) has for whatever reasons a strong grudge against Lucas and the NMMNH&S.

Dr. Silberling also wrote:

As a final suggestion to the Museum Board, I think it would be useful for you or the Board to send whatever final public report is prompted by this Executive Committee discussion to Parker's supervisor at the Petrified Forest National Park. That person should be interested in how his or her employee is serving the scientific community and the public.

which clearly violates the spirit of every whistleblower protection act ever passed. But Mr. Ashman has complete confidence in Dr. Silberling's judgment. And you apparently have complete confidence in Mr. Ashman's judgment.

Please direct a member of your staff to spend a half an hour investigating Mr. Ashman's investigation and the universal condemnation it has received by everyone outside of Dr. Lucas's direct sphere of influence. And please, at minimum, make a public statement distancing yourself from Mr. Ashman's "investigations". You might also consider explaining why he still has his job.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mickey P. Rowe". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and email address.

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