

Now we're talking

Another contender for the same award is a New Castle County Council candidate, this one for the 7th District seat. George Smiley of Swanwyck Estates is a former top official of Teamster Local 326. He wants to be a councilman in one of the new districts because people "will feel comfortable calling" and "talking to him."

He also was admonished in 2001 by Teamsters International President James P. Hoffa for misrepresentation and misuse of union money.

Smiley said he was expecting the charges to become public before now. "It's all a personal vendetta against me by the Ciabattonis," Smiley said. "But my family and I decided to just pay the money and move on with our lives."

Michael S. Ciabattoni is the current vice president of Local 326. His father, Michael J., is a former president. Michael S. Ciabattoni would not comment about Smiley's charges because they are considered an internal union matter.

But Michael J. did because he used their names. "If you want to say we had a vendetta because he was a crook, he's correct," Michael J. Ciabattoni said. "I don't like thieves." Michael was a union official for many years and now does consulting work on negotiations.

While the stories about exactly what happened vary slightly, Smiley admits to having more than \$4,000 in repairs done on his used car that was not covered under the union's automobile reimbursement policy. Smiley said there was no restriction on the union paying for repairs on used cars as opposed to newer ones. (Local 326 pays its top officials a monthly stipend toward newer vehicles.)

But sources in the union said Smiley took the Mercury he purchased with union money and gave it to his wife. He took his wife's Jeep with 86,000 miles, and put nearly \$5,000 of repairs into it so he could use it at his beach home. He was defeated for re-election to his union post.

Smiley was found guilty of misrepresentation by the International's Executive Committee on appeal and he paid the money back.

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