

FAU's former president has traded in the parting gift that caused such an uproar – his red Corvette.

MANY TRIALS, FEW MILES

By LARRY KELLER
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The little red Corvette that former Florida Atlantic University President Anthony Catanese got as a going-away present turned out to be nothing but trouble.



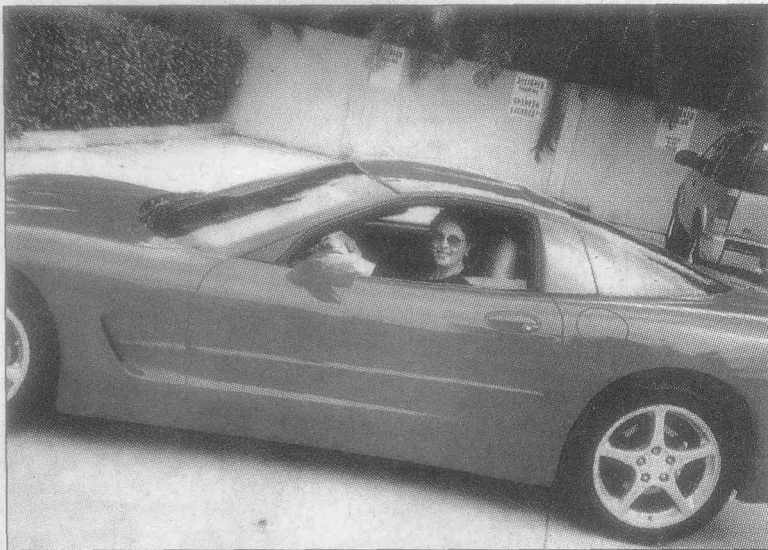
Catanese

His reputation was sullied. So was that of the school's foundation. And an FAU vice president was criminally charged and forced to resign.

All of that, and it turns out that Catanese barely drove his shiny wheels. He averaged about 23 miles per week in it. Now, after less than three years of ownership, Catanese has gotten rid of the car.

"Obviously it's very ironic that so much harm was caused to so many for so little," said **Kenneth Lipman**, an attorney who represented Carla Coleman, who lost her job in the scandal's fallout.

Catanese traded in the car



Miami Herald file photo

ROUGH RIDE: Carla Coleman, who lost her job and received a year of probation, shows off Anthony Catanese's going-away gift in 2002.

on March 30 to a Melbourne dealership and bought a silver 2005 Mercedes Benz SLK350 roadster. Like the Corvette, it's a luxury sports car that sells in the low to mid-40s. Catanese also has a 2003 BMW.

The Kelley Blue Book car buyer's guide lists the trade-in value of a Corvette comparable

to that of Catanese's at \$26,100.

A Melbourne engineer and his elementary school teacher wife, Randolph Hines and Teresa Baggett-Hines, bought the Corvette on April 12. The odometer read 3,285 miles.

"It looks showroom new,"

See CORVETTE, 10A ►

Officials: Evidence lacking for convictions in the case

► CORVETTE from LA

Randolph Hines said. "It was like buying a new old car."

Catanese, 62, did not respond to an e-mail asking why he hardly drove the car and traded it in.

He requested the car as a going-away gift in July 2002 following his resignation after 12 years as FAU president to assume the same job at Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne. He told investigators later that he wanted a Corvette because it was a favorite car of astronauts on the Space Coast, where he was relocating.

Coleman, a top FAU administrator, funneled \$42,000 from the FAU Foundation to Catanese's wife, Sara, so her husband could buy the car. Foundation money is supposed to be spent on programs that benefit students, faculty or the university.

Coleman concealed the Corvette purchase by having an interior design firm pay Sara Catanese for "consulting" work done on FAU's new presidential residence. Coleman then reimbursed the firm with a check from an FAU Foundation account.

The scheme succeeded until *The Palm Beach Post* and then the Florida Department

of Law Enforcement began scrutinizing foundation expenditures early in 2003.

In June 2003, Catanese sent a check for \$42,000 to reimburse the FAU Foundation, along with a letter insisting, "I believed the gift was completely legal and appropriate."

The FDLE thought there was enough evidence to charge the Cataneses with felony crimes, but the state attorney said there was insufficient evidence to obtain convictions. Coleman, however, who resigned her \$185,000-a-year job, was charged with a third-degree felony, pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor and was sentenced to a year of probation.

When the Hineses, who live in Melbourne, bought the storied car on April 12, they knew none of this. "They told me it was somebody who got it as a retirement gift," Randolph Hines said.

Now that he knows the Catanese connection, one mystery about the Corvette seems less cryptic to Hines.

"I guess it answers the question as to why there were so few miles on it," he said. "He probably felt bad driving it around."

Staff researcher Melanie Mena contributed to this story.

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