

'My name has been vindicated,' whistleblowing Alsip cop says

**Collects \$900,000 for
ordeal spurred by his
memos on corruption**

BY JANET RAUSA FULLER
Staff Reporter

James McGreal has endured sleepless nights, too many to count. At work, the Alsip Police officer has felt silent scrutiny from those he said were looking for any excuse to fire him. His hair, black a few years ago, is now gray.

This, he says, is the price he has paid for blowing the whistle on corruption in the town he calls home sweet home. And he doesn't regret it.

"My name has been vindicated," said McGreal, 46.

In a six-year-old case that was dismissed but sent back on appeal to trial last week, the 24-year police veteran accused his bosses of smearing his name, passing him up for promotion and trying to fire him for uncovering illegal gambling and other alleged corruption in Alsip that could be damaging to long-

time Mayor Arnold Andrews.

The legal battle ended last Friday when McGreal agreed to a \$900,000 settlement.

Suspicion confirmed

"For him, it really never was about the money," said his attorney, Jon Loevy. "He wanted to have a public trial ... so they could see what a railroad job this was."



James McGreal
Wants promotion

McGreal's woes began in 1995, when he wrote a memo alerting former Alsip Police Chief Kenneth Wood and former Lt. David Snooks to illegal gambling. He said there were video poker machines at an Elks club — a suspicion that later was confirmed in an investigation by the Cook County sheriff's office.

McGreal said his memo and subsequent memos in 1997 about the gambling and other wrongdoing in the town and within the police department were ignored because of possible links to Andrews.

Instead, Wood and Snooks, acting in concert with the mayor, started investigating McGreal. He

was ordered to see a psychologist and suspended for four months.

While McGreal said the ordeal was "an attempt to rid me of bringing to light their corruption," his foes said he has been a sore loser ever since his unsuccessful bid in 1997 to unseat Andrews.

"This is a guy's paranoia and narcissism rising," Andrews said. "He ran against me for mayor, and he lost, and he's been bitter about it ever since."

'Nothing to support claim'

Bill Kurnik, the attorney for Wood and Snooks, both now retired, maintained that his clients acted within their authority and said McGreal misrepresented himself while trying to dig up dirt in Alsip.

"There was simply nothing to support the claim that my clients were the puppets of the mayor," Kurnik said.

For McGreal, the settlement is a victory. He has no plans to leave the force or move out of town, and he isn't done fighting for the promotion he said he still deserves.

"I characterize it as righting what has been made wrong by the village and Mayor Andrews in particular," he said.