

Retaliatory firing costs firm \$1.3 million

ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Eugene P. Reginelli deserves \$1.3 million after being retaliated against by Motion Industries Inc. for complaining about an office affair a federal jury decided Wednesday night.

Reginelli, a former operations manager at a company branch in Little Rock, sued the company last year after he was given a choice of taking a demotion with half the pay or quitting. Reginelli's attorney Jack Wagoner III, said

Reginelli's problems with the company began in early 1994 when the company brought in a new branch manager, Wagoner said.

The manager, who was married, made advances on one employee and had an affair with another, he said.

Reginelli, a 15-year employee of the company, told the manager in July 1994 that the manager's personal life was common knowledge in the office and was disrupting branch operations, Wagoner said.

The following Monday, [the manager] calls Reginelli into this office and says this is the worst run branch in the country," Wagoner said.

Reginelli, who had no negative comments in his personnel folder at the time, began accruing them over the next several months Wagoner added.

When Reginelli brought the matter up with corporate headquarters officials they suspended him and began an investigation that developed information supporting the branch manager Wagoner said. The company gave

Reginelli the option of a demotion and transfer to Russellville, which Reginelli declined, Wagoner added. Reginelli was then fired.

"The jury was really angry Wagoner said. The jury awarded \$214,000 in back pay and benefits and \$1.1 million in compensatory damages for pain and emotional suffering.

Motion Pictures Industries is a subsidiary of Genuine Parts Inc and has 400 branches across the country.