

July 3, 1999
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Mr. David Horton and
Members of The Board of Directors
Doberman Pinscher Club of America
2 Poe Lane
Westford, MA 01886

Dear Mr. Horton and Members of the Board:

I am in receipt of a letter from Ms. Sharon Hildebrand dated April 16, 1999 indicating that she is filing a grievance against me alleging a violation of the Code of Ethics (#14) and behavior prejudicial to the DPCA, the sport of dogs, and the breed, as specified as specified by the DPCA by-laws. It has been more than one month since Ms. Hildebrand *et al* were asked to specify their charges against me and to provide documentary evidence to substantiate any allegations. To date, nothing has been forthcoming.

On February 21, 1999 I had the opportunity to visit the residence of Teresa Wilds at 4611 Burlington Road, Hyattsville, Maryland. Ms. Wilds is a DPCA member and president of DARE, Inc a rescue group operating out of Maryland. As I stated in my letter to the Investigations Division of the American Kennel Club dated February 28, 1999 (Attachment 1):

“In my seventeen years in rescue I have never seen anything as horrific as the conditions inside Ms. Wild’s house. The inside of the house was filthy beyond imagination. There were feces and garbage throughout. The stench of urine was overpowering. The condition of the dogs was appalling and the obvious signs of neglect were apparent.”

That day, I e-mailed (Attachment 1) Ms. Gwen Lucoff on the COPE/rescue Committee informing her of the conditions at Ms. Wilds as I was certain that the COPE Committee would want to be aware this situation. Ms. Lucoff forwarded my message to Ms. Hildebrand (Attachment 2) who instead of dealing with the situation in an appropriate and professional manner, began a campaign designed to thwart any efforts on my or Ms. Ryan-Shaw’s part to assist me in reporting Ms. Wilds to the authorities.

Therefore, it is my intention by way of this letter is to file a grievance against Ms. Hildebrand for:

- Dereliction of Duty and Conflict of Interest in her capacity as chairperson of the DPCA’s

COPE/Rescue Committee, and

- That Ms. Hildebrand used the DPCA grievance process in a manner that was either reckless and/or malicious. Ms. Hildebrand knew, or should have known that Ms. Wilds been cited for fourteen counts of animal cruelty and unsanitary conditions before she filed the grievance against me.

A check in the amount of twenty-five dollars is enclosed to cover the filing fee.

Background:

Briefly, last fall Ms. Wilds contacted me about obtaining a Doberman puppy for the purpose of showing. Because I had only met her once and had never visited her home, I requested references and received assurance from the treasurer of DARE, Athy Conigliaro, as well as others in their organization that Teresa Wilds would provide a good home for the puppy. On November 7th, 1998 I agreed to let Teresa Wilds have my pup on a trial basis. No papers or money were exchanged.

During the next few months I attempted to meet with Ms. Wilds on several occasions in December and January to see the pup, but was unable to do. She had repeatedly provided one excuse after another as to why she couldn't do so. Finally, I set a definite date for Sunday February 21, 1999 to meet her at the Baltimore shows. However, she did not show up for the appointment. Ms. Conigliaro, who was at the show informed me that Teresa Wilds had sick puppies and could not meet me. At this point I was becoming increasingly alarmed by Ms. Wilds avoidance of me, and informed Ms. Canigliaro that I would go to Ms. Wilds house to meet her since she was unable to come to the show site. Upon me saying this, Ms. Conigliaro called Ms. Wilds from her cell phone and left a message alerting her to my intentions. I left the show with Ms. Dee Shaw Ryan and proceeded to the Wilds residence at 4611 Burlington Road, Hyattsville, Maryland

In my letter to the AKC dated February 28, 1999, I noted the following conditions at Ms. Wilds' residence:

"The first thing I noticed was that the front yard was covered with feces and I was nearly overcome by the odor emanating from the waste products. Teresa Wilds went into the house with Dee Ryan Shaw and I followed. In my seventeen years in rescue I have never seen anything as horrific as the conditions inside Ms. Wild's house. The inside of the house was filthy beyond imagination. There were feces and garbage throughout. The stench of urine was overpowering. The condition of the dogs was appalling and the obvious signs of neglect were apparent."

"The condition of my pup was terrible. He was covered with feces material and reeked of urine and feces. His ears were impacted with filth. He had scars all over him. Pieces missing from his ears. He was shaking uncontrollably. His collar was imbedded into his neck. He had cuts on his head. He was terribly underweight and malnourished."

Ms. Dee Shaw Ryan who accompanied me to Ms. Wilds on February 21, 1999 states in her letter dated February 24, 1999 (Attachment 4):

"I can only describe the condition of the home as cluttered, smelling of cat urine - ammonia smell..." (Paragraph 3, page 1).

"The interior of the house was unclean, trash was strewn on the kitchen floor and all of the main floor rooms smelled of urine."(Paragraph 2, page 2)

"This puppy was/has been neglected, not fed enough food and certainly has not been treated properly in my opinion." (Paragraph 3, page 3)

"I remain concerned for the other dogs who live w/ Ms. Wilds (both her personal and foster dogs) and if this puppy's condition is any example of the care that her dogs receive, well, those other dogs are in jeopardy."
(Paragraph 4, page 3)

Specific Charge: Dereliction of Duty and Conflict of Interest

As chairperson of the COPE/rescue Committee, Ms. Hildebrand has been entrusted with the stewardship of COPE/Rescue money. Most of the operating income of COPE is derived from the generosity of the DPCA members with the largest portion coming from the Ch. Of COPE dinner at the Nationals. It is her responsibility to ensure that the rescue organizations to which COPE/Rescue funds are disbursed are operating in a humane manner consistent with "preserving and protecting the breed."

Certainly Ms. Hildebrand and her Committee are not supposed to act in the capacity as animal control officials as it pertains to animal abuse, neglect or cruelty allegations, but she does have an obligation to follow up on complaints indicating that there might be a problem with such when it involves recipients of COPE funding so as to ensure that no COPE funding goes to individuals or groups who might be under investigation or are guilty. As soon as Ms. Hildebrand received my e-mail, she should have, but didn't, initiate the appropriate course of action.

Furthermore, this is not the first time Ms. Hildebrand has seen allegations relating to the conditions of the animals at the Wilds residence. An incident occurred on January 3, 1998 involving Sharon Schiele and Becky Johnston who are members of the Delaware Valley Doberman Pinscher Assistance, DVDPA. In that incident, they were accused by DARE of puppy kidnapping after they had to remove some puppies of theirs from Ms. Wilds home with the assistance of law enforcement personnel. It was my understanding that at that time Ms. Hildebrand vigorously defended Ms. Wilds to rest of the members of the COPE Committee.

I understand that no action was taken, one of the reasons being, that neither DARE nor the DVDPA were receiving funds from COPE. At this time however, Ms. Hildebrand knew (as she authorizes payments) that DARE was receiving DPCA/COPE funds.

Certainly a second complaint against the same rescue group, on the same charges, should have been raised a red flag with Ms. Hildebrand. If it did, Ms. Hildebrand put the interests of both herself, and her friends, Ms. Wilds and Ms. Canigliaro before the interests of DPCA. If it didn't, Ms. Hildebrand was negligent in her responsibility to the DPCA and the donors to COPE/Rescue.

Ms. Hildebrand's grievance letter raises some disturbing questions as to her involvement in the Wilds affair. She states in her grievance letter of April 16, 1999:

“My concern at that time was that Ms. Wilds, as distraught as she was, would do something "stupid", Ms. Conigliaro and I made arrangements to meet Ms. Wilds immediately, as we both feared what actions she might take.”

That statement poses a very stark question which goes to the very heart of this matter -- just where did Ms. Hildebrand and Ms. Wilds meet?

Ms Hildebrand does not say whether she met Ms. Wilds at her house or some other place. If Ms. Hildebrand did, in fact, meet Ms. Wilds at her place of residence, it would have been impossible for her not to have observed the same, or similar conditions to what myself and Ms. Ryan-Shaw have reported and should have acted accordingly.

On the other hand, if Ms. Hildebrand met Ms. Wilds elsewhere, then she clearly had an obligation to investigate further my allegation on behalf of COPE, but she certainly should have done so for personal reasons since by her own admission “I have on occasion acted as mentor, and have loaned financial support to DARE while they were forming.”

In either case, none of the aforementioned reflects well on Ms. Hildebrand.

Furthermore, Ms. Hildebrand should have recognized that her involvement with DARE, Inc. and the fact that the COPE Committee had disbursed funds to DARE posed a conflict of interest. Instead in her grievance letter she says:

“This dispute was, or should have been between Ms. Wilds and Ms. Fierro. There was no reason to bring DARE, COPE, or DPCA into this issue”

This is a tacit admission that Ms. Hildebrand doesn't admit to the impropriety involved here. An appropriate response on her part would have been to refer the matter to another one of her Committee members for investigation. Ms.Hildebrand, however, either failed to recognize the conflict of interest, or chose to ignore it. Furthermore, perhaps in an attempt to absolve herself of any wrong doing, either by commission or dereliction, in her grievance letter Ms. Hildebrand claims that she had no contact with me via e-mail. She says:

“Ms. Fierro claims that I threatened her by e-mail. I had no contact with her by e-mail. I did have contact with Ms. Ryan-Shaw, and my comments were addressed to her and her part in the theft. Ms. Ryan-Shaw apparently forwarded the e-mail to Ms. Fierro (a breach of copyright law). From that, Ms. Fierro has assumed a threat that was not made, inferring it from an e-mail that was not even addressed to her. There was no threat, and she has had no mail from me related to this event. She alleges in her diatribe that she received e-mail and a threat directly from me.”

Documentary Evidence relating to E-mails from Ms. Hildebrand:

Contrary to Ms. Hildebrand’s assertions, on February 23, 1999 I received an e-mail(Attachment 4) entitled “Your Actions” from Ms. Hildebrand (Perfdogs@aol.com) which is indeed addressed to me, Ms. Ryan-Shaw and Ms. Canigliaro, and cc-ed to several other individuals.

Then on March 9, 1999 she sent another e-mail this time entitled “AC Visit” addressed solely to myself and Ms. Ryan Shaw (Attachment 5) which is far more threatening on tone and goes on to describe a whole series of measures she would take against those filing “false reports.”

While the verbiage in both the e-mails may have been directed at Ms. Ryan-Shaw, I must assume Ms. Hildebrand would not have sent them to me if she did not intend for me to get the message that she was prepared to do some rather unpleasant things to anyone who complained to animal control. Furthermore, these e-mails confirm Ms. Hildebrand’s unwillingness to work with me on this as she was asked to do by her fellow COPE Committee member, Ms. Lucoff.

Specific charge: That Ms. Hildebrand knew, or should have known that Ms. Wilds been cited for fourteen counts of animal cruelty and unsanitary conditions when she filed the grievance against Ms. Fierro. Thus, Ms. Hildebrand used the DPCA grievance process in a manner that was both reckless and malicious.

Ms. Hildebrand had more than one month after the visit by Animal Control to the Wilds residence on March 10, 1999 to determine whether or not Ms. Wilds was in fact cited for any violations before she filed her grievance. There are two possible scenarios presented here: (a) Ms. Hildebrand knew that Ms. Wilds has been cited for cruelty and unsanitary conditions in when she filed her grievance, in which case it is malicious, or (b) Ms. Hildebrand (despite her vigorous defense of Ms. Wilds) never bothered to check with Prince George’s County Animal Management/SPCA before filing her grievance in which case her grievance is reckless.

In her grievance letter, Ms. Hildebrand says emphatically:

“Ms. Wilds has been inspected by both Animal Control and AKC with no findings of abuse or neglect by either organization.”

It is significant to note that Ms. Hildebrand is most careful in her use of terminology, *i.e.*, she specifically does not use the term “animal cruelty,” but is careful to speak only of abuse and

neglect.

Documentary Evidence relating to Animal Control Inspections:

The letter of Ms. Judy L. McClain (Attachment 7), Prince Georges County SPCA Coordinator dated April 30, 1999 states:

“Animal control did respond on March 10th and found several violations. They issued tickets for cruelty, unsanitary conditions, and failure to obtain license; fines totaling \$850. The investigation is still on going.”(Paragraph 4).

A letter from Mr. George Whiting, Associate Director of the Animal Management Division of Prince Georges County Government (Attachment 8) dated April 30, 1999 states:

"Based upon the request from the Commission, two other complaints and a follow-up to a previous investigation in February, Animal Management Division visited the location on March 10, 1999. Conditions were found to be unacceptable under County law and 14 notices of violations were written. On March 31, 1999, an attempt to contact for a recheck was unsuccessful and from appearance and odor coming from the property, conditions had not been improved. On April 13, 1999 further attempts were made to contact the owner unsuccessfully. Fecal matter was observed and conditions appeared to be unimproved. An Animal Control Officer made contact with the owner on April 30, 1999. Some conditions had been corrected." (Paragraph 1)

B. AKC Inspections:

Documentary Evidence relating to AKC Inspections:

On May 24, 1999 Mr. William Hughes, Director of the Investigation and Inspection Field Staff of the American Kennel Club sent a letter (Attachment 9) to Ms. McClain of the Prince George's County Humane Society which states the following:

"Following is the name of an individual whose kennel was inspected recently by an AKC Inspector and which, in his/her opinion, had poor sanitary and/or health conditions.

Teresa Wilds
4611 Burlington Road
Hyattsville, MD 20781-2215"

The letter goes on to describe the conditions observed, and concludes with the following:

"We are forwarding this information to you, in that the AKC's jurisdiction is limited to practices that one must follow to insure proper identification and record keeping of the dogs registered with the American Kennel Club.

We trust that your agency will look into the conditions at this kennel."

In summary, Ms. Wilds was inspected by two different agencies on several occasions over the course of approximately one month. As a result, she was cited for fourteen violations of Prince George's County Maryland law, specifically animal cruelty and unsanitary conditions, and the AKC inspector was concerned enough about Ms. Wilds' animals that a recommendation was made by the AKC to the Prince George's County SPCA/Humane Society to "look into conditions at this kennel." It seems I am the one now under attack by Ms. Hildebrand even though Ms. Wilds is the one with the animal cruelty and unsanitary citations against her. Before filing her grievance against me, Ms. Hildebrand had ample opportunity to confirm the facts, but either through malice or recklessness, choose to file a grievance against me.

Conclusion:

I have been involved with Doberman Pinscher rescue since 1982 and have been a member of the Doberman Pinscher Club of American (DPCA) for approximately 20 years. I strongly believe that every member of the Doberman Pinscher Club of America has the sworn responsibility to "preserve and to protect the breed." As Chairman of the COPE/Rescue Committee Ms. Hildebrand has had the trust invested in her of the membership of DPCA, the rescue community, the donors to COPE/Rescue and the Champions of COPE as well as the DPCA Board, and most importantly the trust of the rescue dogs who are most in need of our protection. By way of her actions, she has violated those trusts.

Since this is one of the most visible committees within the DPCA, I respectfully request the DPCA look into Ms. Hildebrand's actions and how they reflect on the COPE/Rescue Committee, the Club and dobe rescue in general and act accordingly. I hope you will address this situation expeditiously so that others know the truth of the matter, especially since my integrity and reputation within the rescue community have been damaged as a result of Ms. Hildebrand's grievance. I also believe the evidence contained herein is more than sufficient for the Board to dismiss Ms. Hildebrand's grievance against me. If the Board concurs, a letter stating so would be very much appreciated

Also, given the gravity of the offense against Ms. Wilds - animal cruelty, I hope that the Board will suspend this group and its membership from any further COPE funding.

If there is anything else that I need at this point in time to perfect this grievance, kindly notify me immediately. Thank you in advance for your anticipated consideration.

Sincerely,

Rose Anne Fierro

Attachments:

- 1/ E-mail to Gwen Lucoff dated February 21, 1999, Subject: DARE Rescue
- 2/ E-mail from Gwen Lucoff dated February 21, 1999, Subject Re: DARE Rescue
- 3/ Dee Ryan Shaw letter dated February 24, 1999
- 5/ E-mail from S. Hildebrand dated February 23, 1999 entitled "Your Actions."
- 6/ E-mail from Sharon Hildebrand dated March 9, 1999 entitled "AC visit."
- 7/ Letter from Ms. J. McClain, SPCA Cruelty Coordinator dated April 30, 1999
- 8/ Letter from Mr. G. J. Whiting, PGC Government, Animal Control dated May 6, 1999
- 9/ Letter from Mr. William Hughes, American Kennel Club dated May 24, 1999