

July 2, 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. Teresa Wilds dated Monday April 18, 1999, the purpose of which is to file a grievance against me alleging a violation of the Code of Ethics (#14), and slandering COPE, and by doing so the DPCA. It has been more than one month since Ms. Wilds *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. Furthermore, Ms. Wilds made statements in her grievance letter that she knew, or should have known, were false and misleading.

On February 21, 1999 I had the opportunity to visit her place of residence at 4611 Burlington Road, Hyattsville, 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.”

Therefore, it is my intention by way of this letter is to file a grievance against Ms. Wilds, President of Doberman Assistance, Rescue and Education, Inc.(DARE) and a member of the Doberman Pinscher Club of America for violations of the DPCA's Code of Ethics, specifically:

- Number Two -- Keep accurate breeding records, registration papers and pedigrees. Maintain the best possible standards of canine health, cleanliness and care, and
- Number Fourteen -- All members shall conduct themselves at all times in such a manner to reflect credit on the sport of purebred dog showing and Doberman Pinschers in particular. This includes respect for the show site, convention and overflow facilities, and all other aspects of responsible dog ownership.

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 2):

"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)

After rescuing my puppy, I subsequently began to notify the Prince George's County Society SPCA, the American Kennel Club and the DPCA about the conditions under which the animals at Ms. Wilds were kept. The SPCA informed me that they had received several complaints about the conditions at Ms. Wilds and that she had already been scheduled for an inspection on March 9th by the Prince Georges County Animal Control.

I now wish to introduce into evidence certain relevant documents which will serve to establish that Ms. Wilds is in violation of Numbers 2 and 14 of the Code of Ethics, and that her grievance against me is based upon false, incomplete, and misleading information.

**I. DPCA Code of Ethics: 2. "Keep accurate breeding records, registration papers and pedigrees. Maintain the best possible standards of canine health, cleanliness and care."**

**Specific charge against Teresa Wilds: Animal Cruelty and Unsanitary Conditions**

*A. Animal Control Inspections:*

Ms. Wilds states in her grievance letter (page 3, paragraph 1):

"Animal control has been involved and has found no evidence of neglect of any animal in my care. The animals were all found to be in excellent health. Odor control was suggested. I have 3 old cats (age approximately 14) who sometimes forget where they are."

***Documentary Evidence relating to Animal Control Inspections:***

The letter of Ms. Judy L. McClain (Attachment 3), Prince Georges County SPCA Coordinator dated April 30, 1999 states:

"On February 10, 1999 I received a complaint at the same address from someone in the neighborhood who was concerned about health code violations due to the strong smell of dog feces and urine which could be smelled several house away. (Paragraph 2)"

"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 4), dated April 30, 1999 further corroborates the conditions at the Wilds residence:

"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)

Additionally, Mr. Whiting notes that there was a request from the Commission and two other complaints besides mine, plus they were doing a follow-up to a previous investigation. Clearly, the conditions at the Wilds residence were such that they had been reported by three other individuals prior to my complaint, and that she had been under investigation for sometime.

Mr. Whiting also states:

"To date, no Notice of Appeal has been filed with the Commission of Animal Control regarding the violations issued. (Paragraph 2)

Under the ordinances of Prince George's County, Animal Control - Subtitle 3, Sec. 3-117 entitled: "Elections available to person receiving citations", Ms. Wilds had the following options available to her, but did nothing .

Subtitle 3- ANIMAL CONTROL, Sec. 3-117 Election available to person receiving

citation:

(a) A person receiving an Animal Control violation notice or citation must elect one of the following:

(1) To pay the fine provided for in the citation to the Administrator within ten (10) days of receipt of the violation notice or citation: or

(2) Within ten (10) days of receipt of the citation, submit a written request for a hearing and for dismissal of the citation by the Commission: and to pay the fine should the Commission fail to dismiss the citation.

(3) The failure of the person charged to note a timely appeal to the Commission or to pay the amount of the civil penalty within the time for appeal shall constitute an admission of liability for the amount of civil penalty.

Ms. Wilds has neither paid the fines, nor has she appealed the citations.

*B. AKC Inspections:*

Ms. Wilds states in her grievance letter (page 3, paragraph 2):

"In addition to the local animal control agency inspection, The American Kennel Club inspectors have recently examined all the animals here and also found them to be very healthy. See attached letter."

***Documentary Evidence relating to AKC Inspections:***

The inspection report from the AKC's visit on April 10 which Ms. Wilds submitted as part of her grievance indicates that there are areas of non-compliance, but these relate to record-keeping and tattoos.

On May 24, 1999 Mr. William Hughes, Director of the Investigation and Inspection Field Staff of the American Kennel Club sent a letter (Attachment 5) 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."

*C. Condition of Ms. Fierro's puppy:*

Ms. Wilds states in her grievance letter (page 2, paragraph 3):

"Cruiser, the name of the puppy in question, was in excellent health, spirits and full of Dobe hijinx. The tattoo number quoted by Ms. Fierro on the puppy she took to the vets is incorrect."

*Documentary Evidence relating to the puppy's condition:*

A letter from Dr. T.W. Stranglien, attending veterinarian, dated May 21, 1999 (attachment 6), describes the condition of my puppy one day after leaving the Wilds residence:

"Cruiser's weight was 54# and he appeared thin, he was not using his left hind leg completely, his skin and coat condition appeared irritated and possibly infected, ears were dirty and a piece of his left ear was missing, his temperature was 101.6."

"Upon my examination, Cruiser's left hind leg seemed to have underdeveloped muscle mass as in comparison to his right hind leg. The left hind leg seemed to be moderately painful;"

"Cruiser's weight was below normal for this breed and age animal. A fecal examination revealed Roundworm and Hookworm present"

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. 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." Additionally, Ms. Wilds was negligent in the care of my puppy placed with her on a trial basis.

**II. DPCA Code of Ethics: 14. " All members shall conduct themselves at all times in such a manner to reflect credit on the sport of purebred dog showing and Doberman Pinschers in particular. This includes respect for the show site, convention and overflow facilities, and all other aspects of responsible dog ownership."**

*Specific charge: Ms. Wilds used the DPCA grievance process against me in a manner that was both reckless and malicious, and her grievance was for the purpose of retaliating against me for my complaints to the Prince George's County SPCA, the AKC and DPCA regarding conditions under which the animals were kept at the Wilds residence. By way of DPCA grievance process, Ms. Wilds hoped to intimidate me into retracting of my complaints to these organizations, and to further intimidate me from pursuing additional animal cruelty charges against Ms. Wilds. Additionally, Ms. Wilds letter contained misrepresentations of fact which were designed to mislead the Board, as she knew when she filed her grievance that she had been cited for fourteen counts of animal cruelty and unsanitary conditions.*

Ms. Wilds knew she was in violation of fourteen counts of Prince George's County Maryland law, specifically animal cruelty and unsanitary conditions when she filed this grievance. It is important to note that Ms. Wilds is very careful in her use of terminology, *i.e.*, she denies neglect and abuse but fails to mention "animal cruelty." She also knew, or should have known, that she was under investigation by animal control as they had scheduled an appointment to visit her premises on February 10, 1999, well before my encounter with her Sunday February 21, 1999. Therefore, it is my contention that her grievance was deliberately filed in attempt to retaliate against myself, to damage my reputation and credibility among the Doberman rescue community, and to intimidate me into not cooperating further with the SPCA, the AKC and the DPCA.

Also, on March 9, 1999 Prince George's Animal Management Division faxed a copy of my complaint letter to Chesapeake Animal Control in Virginia, and through an unfortunate set of circumstances confidential documents were obtained by either Ms. Wilds, Ms. Canigliaro and/or Ms. Hildebrand from Chesapeake AC. As a result of that, Ms. Judy McClain sent me a letter (Attachment 7) dated May 16, 1999 in which she says:

"I am requesting that Associate Director George Whiting investigate why confidential material was disclosed. Through obtaining your letter I feel that the parties that have obtained this information are now planning to retaliate against you."

Ms. Wilds states in her grievance letter:

"Ms Fierro's letter slanders Doberman Rescue Assistance and education, Athy Canigliaro, Sharon Hildebrand and myself. The letter is full of lies, innuendos, and accusations, which are totally unfounded. It calls into question the motivations of the rescue group, as well as our own membership in the DPCA" (page 2, paragraph 8)

"I am asking for a retraction of her statements, that she cease and desist her actions and an apology. The retraction and apology should be made in writing to all the persons who were sent the original letters. A copy of the apology and retraction should also be sent to me and to the DARE officers. The cease and desist order should prevent any further slanderous statements. (Page 3, paragraph 5).

My original concerns for the welfare of the animals in the care of Ms. Wilds (as outlined in both my letters of March 1999 to the AKC and the DPCA) were obviously well founded. Letters from both the SPCA, the Prince Georges County Animal Control as well as the AKC substantiate the deplorable conditions that existed at the Wilds residence, and in fact, Ms. McClain recommends that I pursue further action against Ms. Wilds relating specifically to my puppy. In her letter to me dated April 30, 1999 she says:

"I will keep you informed of any developments and recommend that you contact the Commission For Animal Control to ask for a hearing regarding cruelty to your "pup" that was in the care of Teresa Wilds."

"You are to be commended for your concern for the animals at Ms. Wilds. We are the voice for animals. Hope your pup is doing better."

### **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." By reporting animal cruelty, I have done just that and make no apologies for my actions. The SPCA has even commended me for actions on behalf of the dogs at the Wilds place. It seems that I am the one now under attack even though Ms. Wilds is the one with the animal cruelty and unsanitary citations against her.

I respectfully request the DPCA will take some action to address this situation so that others know the truth of the matter, especially since my integrity and reputation have been damaged as a result of Ms. Wilds grievance. Given the gravity of the offense committed by Ms. Wilds - animal cruelty, I hope that the Board will impose the maximum penalty on her, and suspend DARE and its members from any further COPE funding.

I also believe the evidence contained herein is more than sufficient for the Board to dismiss Ms. Wilds' grievance against me. If the Board concurs, a letter stating so would be very much appreciated.

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/ Letter to the AKC dated February 28, 1999
- 2/ Dee Ryan Shaw letter dated February 24, 1999
- 3/ Letter from Ms. J. McClain, SPCA Cruelty Coordinator dated April 30, 1999
- 4/ Letter from Mr. G. J. Whiting, PGC Government, Animal Control dated May 6, 1999
- 5/ Letter from Mr. William Hughes, American Kennel Club dated May 24, 1999
- 6/ Letter from Dr. T.W. Stranglien dated May 21, 1999
- 7/ Letter from Judy McClain dated May 16, 1999