

**From:** Deborah Newbrun <deborahdooze@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 12, 2013 5:29 PM  
**To:** Ken Kramarz <Ken@tawonga.org>; steve@catechi.com  
**Cc:** Michael Katten <mkatten@yahoo.com>  
**Subject:** Towards healing

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Dear Ken and Steve,

I write to you both after having met with Diane Stern last week. She shared with me that you think I told the Rittenbergs that "Ken likes trees more than people" and that "I thought I would have been a better director for Tawonga." Neither of those things are true. I am so sorry you thought I would have shared that. She also told me I was not in "good standing" with Tawonga which I was surprised to hear as two days earlier I had been invited to lead the Gratitude Shabbat. Since this summer, I have been praised by Board Members and Tawonga staff and community for the Erev Rosh Hashanah Services I led with Isaac, and just last week I received the sweetest post card and a gift certificate from Jamie thanking me profusely for changing my plans, coming right up to camp and giving her strength and support at the start of third session. (As fate would have it I was scheduled to come up three days later so I adjusted my time to come sooner). And you remember, I joined the team of former staff volunteers that greeted the buses in Oakland after session two, shmoozed with the parents before the campers arrived and answered their questions. I attended Annais's funeral, comforted the father and that was the only conversation I had with either parent. (I never spoke to Penny except to extend condolences) With the dad, I attempted to answer his question of why camp hadn't contacted him right away. "I am sorry they didn't, am sure they intended to, it is their

practice, phone lines were down etc etc" was my reply.

I am very sorry if you think I have made things worse for camp, it was never my intention. I know in hard times wires get crossed and things get said and unsaid and resaid and they are not all true. Here is what I have to say.

Some history: In 2006 when I was Executive Director of Camp and PG&E told me to take down one tree under their power lines and pointed out another sick tree (not near the power lines that they thought should come down) I hired Denise Britton to evaluate the trees. She confirmed we should take down the tree, so while PG&E crews were at camp I had them take down the second sick tree. Ken I shared this with you on a letter I sent August 6 2013...

"You were so adamant about me **not** taking down trees in downtown Tawonga even after I hired Certified Arborist Denise Britton to evaluate PG&E's recommendation that I remove the two oaks, and she concluded that they were unsafe. Board members who served with me as ED still reflect to this day on how difficult you made taking out these two unsafe trees for all of us. I had those two trees removed before the summer season of 2006 yet even early this summer, now seven years later, I heard you were still telling my friends how upset you were that I removed the trees, including naming a stump after me."

Obviously, it hurts my feelings that you are calling a stump "Deb's Stump." Sydney was still my wife during the tree debacle and remembered it, she is also married to Annais's cousin. Syd and I wondered aloud with each other the week Annais died, if you, Ken had had the trees assessed by Denise because you were so against my taking down the trees in downtown Tawonga, furthermore she is the one who told me the "Deb's stump" story and others have since said, "Oh yes, he told me that too." These were private conversations with people close to me. I am sure you know I would not want these conversations to reach any public or semi-public sphere. A different conversation took place that week with Michael Katten who remembered feeling deeply aggravated by the calls Ken directed at him from former campers asking that Michael save the trees.

You know I spoke to Brian Wise (because as you probably know, I was contacted by so many people in the community the day the tree fell to see if I knew what was going on...Tawonga funders, Federation staff, Tawonga parents, past staff, past board members that I literally had to stop working for Hazon and field phone calls the rest of that day. I couldn't help at the office b/c the BART strike left me working from Berkeley that day - so there was much worry and no answers and every time I called Gregg he said they knew nothing, it was scary and stressful as you know.) A few days later I vented to Brian, cried on the phone and truly let loose about my worry how this tree falling and killing a person brought back the 2006 tree issues with Ken, did he do due diligence about getting the trees inspected? etc. I called him back within an hour of our conversation and asked him not to share the content, and I apologized for letting loose, but I guess he did share, Diane knew about it. My request that Brian keep the content of my conversation with him confidential was genuine; it was a very hard couple of days and everyone was having a hard time.

At Tawonga, when I came up to support Jamie and the others, Jamie told me Ken did have Denise check on all the trees and that was it, I stopped talking about my worry about the trees. With some inside friends, I shared what I have just shared with you, Steve, and what I shared with you Ken, earlier this summer, that this tree falling brought back the fraught difficult dealings I had with Ken around taking trees down in 2006. That's it.

Ken, I wondered why you didn't speak to me when I saw you the other day. I had no idea you thought I was taking about the trees to the Rittenbergs, I have not and will not and I have no idea why they said those things to you. You never responded to my letter where I said, let's not talk about trees, but let's get a drink and talk about building community, about Jewish life etc.

All of us have had a long relationship with each other and with Tawonga with many many happy memories. We also feel the underbelly of hurts, resentments, and unspoken pain.

I think it would be helpful to meet face to face along with Michael Katten – the four of us. I think we could clear the air and move forward with a little more softness and trust.

What do you think?

Deborah

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Wherever you go, there you are. Your luggage is another story.