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To: Jeanne	From: Bruce Kershner
Co: Jabanoski	Co:
Dept: John, Sarah,	Phone #:
Fax #: Paul	Fax #:

353 Fruitwood Drive
 Williamsville, NY 14221
 July 6, 1993

Dear GLU Board Member:

As you are probably aware by now, Terry Yonker has terminated me from employment with GLU. At the request of Sarah Miller and Jeanne Jabanoski, I have submitted this letter to share with you my impressions of this irresponsible decision.

I also formally request that the board approve a severance package of three months salary. As you will see from letter, I think it is the only just and humane approach, and a way to allow me to leave with dignity, as well as to acknowledge my service to GLU. THIS instant termination has created a severe hardship for my, my wife and my children.

Mr. Yonker informed me that "because of financial shortfalls, the executive committee approved my decision to lay you off, effective immediately. You have until the end of the day to pack up and leave." He claimed that it was strictly a financial decision and that someone had to get laid off. The decision to lay *somebody* off may have had financial and rational justifications. But a look at the evidence shows that the decision to choose me, of all those to choose from, was based on Mr. Yonker's *personal* intentions, not a financial one. I assert that Mr. Yonker successfully misled the executive committee into believing it was solely a financial decision.

Employers typically use several criteria to base a decision on who to lay off. A look at them will make my point clear.

Seniority is the most common criterion. Based on this, I am the most senior program employee by far, having served GLU for almost six years, longer than any employee except the secretary Michelle. There are several others who have served far less time, and would have been normally the first to look at for potential layoff.

Dedication, loyalty and commitment is another criterion. I have proven my loyalty to GLU in hundreds of ways over the years. I have risen above the call of duty by serving in a directorial function during the four month gap between the first and the second directors, and again as acting co-director during the 6 week gap after Mr. Weller left and before Mr. Yonker came on. I stepped in to complete projects and publications that were abandoned by employees who departed before the projects were completed. Examples are three citizen guides of Jim Ahl, and the pesticide report and 10th anniversary commemorative book started by Glen Gelinis. These were all massive commitments to jump into without warning and I did it without hesitation and at the expense of my ongoing projects. Whenever "crunch" time came just before each Annual Meeting, I took responsibility for producing or heading the effort for every Annual Report from 1988 to 1993, often with minimal assistance from anybody else. This was done even though I had the difficult task of putting out the newsletter almost singlehandedly during the same period. The annual and other reports were never part of my job description. I went beyond the call of duty in many other ways. I totally revamped GLU's entire filing system in 1988. I created, organized and maintained GLU's archives and photo and slide collection without ever having been asked. I contributed to the "care and feeding" of GLU in more ways than I can remember, including keeping the morale up of my fellow employees when things were really down.

A third common criterion is performance and achievement. I have been responsible for perhaps a third of all GLU's staff-generated achievements since I was hired. I was cofounder of three RAPS: can claim much of the credit for the U.S. and Canada's

designation of Erie as the 43rd Area of Concern (a 4-year intense effort); my efforts successfully defeated the Lowell diversion; I discovered, exposed and caused the halting of the Kenosha diversion, and created a setting that will likely prevent future illegal diversions from occurring; I helped create and write the Canadian Great Lakes Wetlands Action Plan, which will be Canada's official policy and will seek a "net gain" in wetlands; I was GLU's originator of the Lake Erie Alliance concept (1990 with Virginia Aveni), long before the actual organizing effort began. I single-handedly created and maintained GLU's extensive Environmental Clearinghouse files (never part of my job description). I was awarded "Environmentalist of the Year" in 1987 and 1988 by New York chapters of the Sierra Club and the Adirondack Mountain Club, and won a state-wide award for the best "Earth Day show of the Year" in New York State (1991). Throw in achievements with spills, zebra mussels, NY Open Space Plan, the passage of Buffalo's safe drinking water ordinance, GLU's Earth Day programs, and much more. I was responsible for GLU's primary communication tool, the newsletter, with minimal assistance from anybody most of the years.

A fourth criterion is ability to work with and get along with others. I have had a good to superb relationship with all my fellow staffers, and have had many close relationships with board members. I believe I have had the respect, and in some cases admiration, of most of my grassroots colleagues.

Based on these four criteria, you can make your own conclusions as to whether it made any sense to choose me for layoff. I do not wish *anybody* else to be laid off. I wish it could be avoided entirely. But we must separate the necessity for this decision from Mr. Yonker's true intentions for choosing me. I was certainly not a logical justified first choice.

So what was behind Mr. Yonker's decision? I'll just lay out the facts as I experienced them.

Starting in September (a month after he started), Mr. Yonker appeared to regularly ignore me, to my puzzlement. He acted annoyed in my presence, and I received only criticism when I did encounter him. He often didn't share with me information relevant to my formal duties. Although he met with the other staff individually on a frequent basis to discuss planning for projects, he called me into his office to meet with me only twice, once to make (unfounded) accusations about my loyalty, and the other to lay me off. He never once initiated a greeting of "hello" or "goodby" to me upon arrival or departure from the office. He indicated to me (often in oblique or confusing ways, or by a lack of response to my questions) to pull back or minimize my involvement in nearly *all* of my formally assigned duties, leaving me wondering what I should be doing. These included RAPs, diversions, public speaking requests, wetlands, habitat issues, zebra mussels, media interviews and natural areas. But he gave me almost no clear assignment to other duties. He never once gave me positive feedback on any of the projects I completed or had success in. He never once met with me for a personnel evaluation.

I soon concluded that he was simply giving me the cold shoulder, and then I realized that he was freezing me out. It wasn't long before I recognized the writing on the wall, that he would sooner or later terminate me. So it wasn't a surprise when he did just that.

Why did he act this way to me? I don't know. He admits (when he told me of my termination) that I performed my duties well. But the behavior I described started after his first month, before he could have made a decision on how to address GLU's financial concerns. When I sensed his attitude, I repeatedly approached him with offers to take on whatever project he wanted, to sit down and discuss my work priorities, and other clear demonstrations of my interest in working with him and

serving him with commitment. In all these cases, he rebuffed or ignored my overtures, always, *always* without explanation. If I was doing something he didn't like, he never gave me a chance to rectify it.

So after six years of loyalty, achievements, loving and caring for GLU, hundreds of hours of overtime, working energetically for our noble cause, he called me into his office, announced my layoff and ordered me to vacate *immediately*. I wasn't even given the respect of a two-week notice, as even the polluting corporations are expected to do. This was the behavior of someone taking out their personal feelings on someone, and was not necessary to carry out a financial decision. His act of instant termination, and his behavior since September, bely his claims that choosing me for layoff was "strictly a financial decision."

Why have I told you this? Because, as someone who has worked with and for you for so many years, it is only right that you hear my side, and learn about your director's decisions.

Mr. Yonker's further claim that this is "only a layoff", not a firing, doesn't make a bit of difference. I am now without a job, and was given no preparation whatsoever to look for one. So much for "social justice." So much for respect for decent labor practices. So much for decency to a fellow human being.

I am deeply disappointed that the decision was made in this way. With all I have given GLU, I deserved more than several hours to pack up and leave.

Regarding my request for a severance package (a rather modest sum in reality), if Mr. Yonker claims that he simply doesn't have the funds, I ask you to question that claim. Two promotions occurred in the last several months. There are many feasible options that can be considered. I cannot believe that GLU cannot find the funds to provide me a severance package.

What Mr. Yonker has done is unfortunate for me but it will be temporary. I will ultimately find another job. But for my future contributions to GLU and its work, the loss is permanent.

May all your efforts to clean up our greatest lakes achieve success in our lifetime!

Regretfully,

Bruce Kershner

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