

Fellow Board Members, Chapter Representatives and AGAers:

I fully appreciate how painful a time this has become and that I played a role in making it worse instead of better in spite of my efforts to the contrary.

This is still a new Board operating under a new AGA organizational structure. Restructuring and large scale change inevitably produce a period of chaotic activity as settling in takes place, and the settling in invariably takes longer than even experienced people believe it will. Collateral damage occurs during such times, sometimes in strange ways and sometimes among unlikely participants. Recalibration and recuperation is inevitable before benefits of the new structure take hold and a steady state is achieved. Within the big picture, and compared to similar situations in other organizations, the present difficulties in our organization are not as unusual as they appear at this moment. But they are painful and difficult nonetheless and I regret that.

On the Matter of My Vote to Replace Chris Kirschner

In my observation while working on Board level AGA related matters, Chris Kirschner's lack of management skill, chronic and stubbornly poor operational judgment and lapses in taking Board counsel in areas where his understanding and experience were almost nonexistent were all a serious problem, but none alone were capital offenses. It was at the moment when I observed his poor judgment turn into what I viewed to be a malfeasance that I came to believe he should be replaced.

This occurred late March 2003 when Chris Kirschner gave tacit approval to Chris Garlock to advertise a link in the eJournal pointing to the abrasive NAMT report that refuted Ms. Feng's complaints. Chris Kirschner was fully aware of the Board's desire to somehow remediate the heavily contentious convictions about properly handling the NAMT report; as a compromise battling members of the Board reached consensus to include the NAMT report as part of the NAMT record that existed in an obscure and unlinked AGA webpage and then to quietly move on.

The eJournal goes out to not only the full AGA membership but also thousands of non member players, quite the opposite of quietly moving on. After the fact, Chris Kirschner told me it was Chris Garlock's independent right to publish whatever he wanted in the eJournal without regard to what the Board wanted. Chris Garlock told me, on the other hand, that, when they discussed it, if Chris Kirschner instructed him not to publish the link to the report, he would not have done so. Chris Kirschner continued to cling to his view that what Chris Garlock felt like publishing in the eJournal took precedence over the Board's view on the proper handling of the troublesome report.

It's accurate to say that Chris Kirschner was never given some formal or written Board directive, but he fully and repeatedly acknowledged to me that he knew the Board's consensus clearly but acted to the contrary anyway. My focus here is not the wisdom or folly or practicality of the Board's informal but explicitly expressed wish about how it wanted the NAMT report handled, rather about Chris Kirschner's

misconduct in purposefully failing to enforce the Board's expressed desire and his subsequent facile defense of it.

I understand others on the Board evaluated the specific situation I mentioned and his general performance with varying degrees of difference from my own and I am not describing this event or his performance at this time to debate it further or to try to convince you here on the merits. My point is simply that any who argue that my view or that my vote to replace him were based on something other than what I believed to be serious considerations for the AGA are truly misguided. Nevertheless, that I should have sought more outside counsel to validate or course-correct my action is a valid criticism, especially in light of working within a split and contentious board.

#### On the Matter of My Statements at the National Assembly Pertaining To the Search Committee

In August, at the Congress, I informed the Assembly that the Search Committee was not about replacing Chris Kirschner but about collecting candidate information to help with an orderly transition. In fact, prior to the inception of the Search Committee, I felt, based on assorted discussions I had had with Board colleagues that a majority of the Board would be unable to converge on a decision to replace Chris Kirschner. After the election results were in and I had lost, I had no interest in trying to ignite anything, nor agitate, although my opinion about our organization needing a new President was still firm. I did not expect and was surprised when other Board members decided to make and support a drastic motion in October. Of course, I now see clearly how a reasonable person, hearing my words at the National Assembly and then hearing about the Board vote on October 16<sup>th</sup>, would feel deceived. For that I am truly sorry and humbly apologize to all of you.

#### Going Forward

In the context of the AGA and pure volunteer work, I've been an active go player, club manager, tournament director, Journal editor, AGA President, pro-workshop organizer, multiple committee member, Internet league organizer, chapter rep, go book publisher, Board member, recruiter, teacher and more. It's been a trip. Now I will return to the beginning and the Great Game, a game that traverses age, culture, politics, gender and even time. Especially among those who choose to remain angry with me personally or with the way I did my job, I shall seek out opportunities to communicate with you across the go board, a space where politics and rancor are ultimately left behind.

With All Due Respect,

John C. Stephenson  
October 24th, 2003