

## A little background...

The club started going downhill in 2011, when Jean Ribbeck became president and didn't completely adhere to the constitution. I ended up as secretary again in 2013 and found out what was going on. As I insisted she follow the constitution there was rebellion within the board of directors. I was outnumbered by her followers that just wanted to let things slide.

I ran for president in 2014, but the opposition party had a get-out-the-vote campaign that I wasn't aware of and lost. The ABC was hijacked.

The last straw for me was when they (Susan, the new secretary) removed Beth's (a director) post on the forum, then removed her as an Administrator on the forum and then banned her there. In the fall of 2014 the Board voted to make all Directors Administrators. That gave them all equal authority on the forum, but Susan took it upon herself to reign supreme over Beth by doing all that I mentioned. An apology from Susan and correcting her mistake would have been the right thing, but didn't happen. Clif, the new President, stood by silently. Any and every other Board member should have unbanned Beth and reinstated her as an Administrator, but that didn't happen. At that point, constitutionally he should have had the Board members vote to remove Susan, but still silence. It was said I wanted a new election, but it isn't true and I feel the constitution is clear on how vacant Board positions are to be filled. I asked Clif to appoint a new President that the remaining Board members could agree on and resign. Others asked for a new election. He refused both offers to keep the club together, so many resignations were submitted forking the club into two. Instead of fighting city hall and in order to maintain our integrity we walked away and reorganized the club as the Ameraucana Alliance, on February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015.

The ABC officers posted a statement on their forum in March, 2015 about the Ameraucana Alliance. It contains some truth, some half-truths, some falsehoods (what we used to call lies) and a lot of innuendo. It is posted below.

### The lies of Connie Jean Ribbeck, Paul Smith, Susan Mouw & Clif Redden, by John W Blehm.

My color key:      **Very Questionable**   **Innuendo**      **False/lie**

[Ameraucana Breeders Club - Statement from the Board of Directors](http://ameraucanabreedersclub.org/forum/index.php?topic=2643.msg18953#msg18953)

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« on: March 03, 2015, 11:44:34 AM »

Some of you have received emails, soliciting your membership in another Ameraucana Breeders Club... **Some are being told it is a battle between the Old Guard and the new, or between the Ameraucana "purists" vs the "projects".** **Some of you have wondered why the Board is not responding to the attacks, questions, and accusations.** For a while, **we felt it was better to take the high road ...**

Here is our statement. **This is a chronology of the events that led up to the recent turmoil in the Ameraucana Breeders Club.** **This is, as close as we can come without naming innocent parties, the chain of events that have brought us to this point.**

Before you read any farther, know that 1) The Club is alive **and well** and will survive, 2) ...

**To say that all the fault is on the shoulders of one side or another would be inaccurate...**

There **is a new Ameraucana club being formed by John Blehm.** He is calling it the Ameraucana Alliance and the website can be seen here: <http://ameraucanaclub.org/>. Several have left ABC to join his club: Mike Gilbert, Duane Schroeder, Beth Curran, to name a few.

How we got to this point is rather lengthy. **We'll make it as brief as possible.**

John Blehm and Clif Redden both were candidates for President in 2014 for the 2015-2016 term. Sharon Yorks, a Board member at the time of the election, campaigned for Clif (without his knowledge), and against John, by calling and/or texting "10-12" people and promoting Clif as President. In some of these texts and phone calls, she may or may not have used strong terms describing John - depending on who you talk to.

There were 35 votes total cast for the election. Neither the election commissioner, Mike Gilbert, nor the Secretary/Treasurer, John Blehm, reported how many votes were cast for each candidate, only that Clif won. ..

Mike Gilbert, as Election Commissioner, was responsible for turning over the election results to the Secretary/Treasurer, John Blehm. The Constitution does not address this, so it is a little vague, but it does not say whether the election commissioner is supposed to turn over the ballots, complete with the voter names, or just the final tally. Mike decided to turn over the complete ballots, with names, of who voted for whom.

After receiving the ballots, John Blehm called (some or all of) those who did not vote for him ; including a 12 year old girl, and demanded to know why they did not vote for him. We believe he also used the membership list at this time to contact names on the list, either to see how they voted or for some other personal purpose. It was not Club business.

At some point, John learned that Sharon had sent those texts and/or made phone calls. At that point, he decided that Sharon had, singlehandedly, swung the election in Clif's favor and had acted inappropriately. But, he made no complaint to the Board, of which Jean Ribbeck was President, at that time. If he had made a complaint then, the Board could have investigated what happened and, perhaps, avoided all this. But it was never reported, so no action was taken.

Mike Gilbert has recently stated that there other indiscretions at the time of, or just preceding, the election. He has stated that someone brought new members in and told them how to vote. Again, no report was filed at the time, so no action was taken. And no one, other than Mike Gilbert and John Blehm know who voted for whom, or even what the final tally was.

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Between January 1st and January 31st, John Blehm sent 42 emails to the new Board - 18 of them in the first 5 days of the New Year. Many of these were suggestions of changes he wanted made.

Jan 8 - Susan received the last of three boxes from John. The boxes included the first of two checks from John, drawn on the personal account John had opened at his credit union for the Ameraucana Breeders Club, various historical bulletins, egg color charts, ABC patches, some postage, and other miscellaneous items. What they did not include, and we have yet to receive are: any prior financial records (what cash was received, what expenses paid and to whom), any prior meet reports (particularly important for tracking project varieties), information on what vendors were used to purchase patches, egg color charts, printed handbooks, etc, information on who has the "traveling awards", and other records pertaining to the business of the Ameraucana Breeders Club.

Jan 16 - John sent Susan copies of the Word documents, for editing the forms for the ABC website...

Note - These dates are crucial to understanding when the new Board was up and in operating mode. Up until the very end of January, we were all in a transitional mode.

Around the first of February, the Board began discussing John's suggestion for changes to the Meet Policy. We determined that to be the highest priority item, as there were many upcoming Meets scheduled. In the process of this discussion, it was learned that John had changed Meet Policy, as to who gets what rewards and ribbons, in August 2013, without any input from the Board of Directors at the time, and without notifying the Board he was making the change. He changed the Meet Reports to reflect this change in policy. The current Board decided to return to the previous policy and changed the Meet Report to reflect a return to the way things were done prior to John's decision to change it.

Around the middle of February, John posted on the forum that we had not responded to any of his suggestions and posted individually each of his suggestions.

Things around this time started happening so fast, it has all become somewhat of a blur, so we will just summarize the events.

John first demanded that a new "emergency" election be held, as, in his opinion, Clif illegally won through Sharon's "unconstitutional" actions. Of course, there is no Constitutional guideline against any member campaigning for or against another candidate for office. When it was explained to him that there was no provision in the Constitution for an emergency election, and changes to the Constitution could only take place at the annual Membership meeting held in conjunction with the National Meet, he then demanded that Clif and Sharon (who was no longer on the Board), step down and, "get this Club going again." Mike Gilbert then gets involved and also demands a new election. Duane Schroeder (who was on the Board) also proposed to the Board that there be a new election. The Board holds a vote and it was voted not to hold a new election and that Clif should not step down. Although, even if the Board had voted yes, we could not have Constitutionally held a new election.

At some point during all this, Beth Curran (a Board member) posts a long message on the forum, accusing the current Board of unconstitutional actions, demanding that Clif sanction Sharon York for her actions last year (Clif was not President at the time, nor was there any report filed to the Board at that time), quoting from a private email to the Board (which was confidential), and misrepresenting her (Beth's) actions immediately following the election. She also stated that she had spent approx. 3 hours on the phone with Sharon York prior to the election, where Sharon called John names. The post was removed. Beth re-posted it. This was repeated 5 times, until Beth was banned for two days (as a cool down period). There is no Constitutional guideline regarding who can or cannot be banned on the Board. A previous notification against inflammatory posts had been removed at some point prior to this Board tenure and, therefore, there was no policy, either. Before banning Beth, Susan posted the entire message in an email to the Board, and, not getting a response in email, attempted to call several members of the Board. Failing that, she made the decision to ban her for two days.

Continued demands from Mike, Duane, and John for Clif to resign and name someone else President, Initially, John demanded that Clif step down and appoint Mike Gilbert President, but Mike said he didn't want it. John then demanded that Mike's name be replaced with Paul Smith's. Clif emailed a response that he had done nothing wrong and was not going to resign. Within an hour of Clif's response, John posted his resignation on the forum. Prior to his resignation, John went through the forum and removed many posts.

All during this time and prior to his resignation, John was doing two things: 1) posting accusatory posts on the forum against the current Board and 2) using the membership list, that he had from his tenure as Secretary/Treasurer, to email ABC members with accusations of current Board mis-conduct, and unconstitutional behavior, though exactly what unconstitutional behavior had occurred was never stated.

The Constitution requires the Secretary/Treasurer "... shall conduct club correspondence..." Additionally, the outgoing Secretary/Treasurer "...shall surrender all files..." (Article II, Ameraucana Breeders Club By-laws) On Feb 16th, Susan sent an email to John requesting the following items:

"Financial records: to include, but not limited to, income, expenses, deposits, payments. Right now, I have no information on any previous years, which makes it hard to predict or budget for future expenses. Additionally, as we contemplate the pros and cons of legalizing the non-profit status of the club, this data is crucial to making an accurate and knowledgeable decision.

Meet Reports. As we have at least one variety that is pending recognition from the APA and ABA, it is absolutely necessary that the Club maintain records on the numbers of these varieties that have been shown. Those records should be in the hands of the Secretary/Treasurer, as the responsible party for record keeping of the Club.

Election results. Please forward all complete election lists used to determine/calculate the results of this past, and earlier, elections.

Vendor lists. Particularly those with whom the Club has previously done business on a regular basis and have records of our normal course of business. This will help avoid future pitfalls, by avoiding vendors that have been tried before and failed to perform, and potentially save money for the Club by saving on initial costs (such as set-up printing charges)

Any other historical records about awards (eg, traveling awards), finances, expenses, etc that would be considered part of the Club's archival and historical records."

His response was "where is my membership list?"

As he had previously abused the confidential information on the member's list (all those that opt out of the Breeder's Directory are confidential), Susan told him she would not send him a new membership list. He then asked Paul Smith for one, Paul, too, declined to send him one.

Shortly after this email to John, Mike Gilbert emails the Board, saying that these records are "non-essential" and John didn't have anything else to send. He also mentioned that a recently discovered club "fund" had been discovered and those funds were on their way to me. So far, none of the above items have been received, including the funds from this forgotten account.

This about sums it up. We hope now that we can all put this past us and move forward.

Respectfully

Clif Redden, President  
Paul Smith, South Central District Director  
Jean Ribbeck, Western District Director  
Susan Mouw, Secretary/Treasurer  
3/2/15