

March 25, 2009

MVCC Response to David Welch's letter that will appear in the next issue of *Supply Line*.

Dear Fellow MVPA Members,

It has often been said that history is influenced, and at times rewritten, by the victor following periods of conflict or war. The side possessing greater power or political influence can usually shape the outcome of certain events, regardless of the facts or the truth surrounding the events. The MVPA's current elected Board of Directors is using its power and influence to mask its actions and intentions with respect to recent decisions made by the Board. Specifically, the MVPA Board is attempting to sidestep its decision to remove of Kenton Tucker and to downplay or overlook the reasons why the Military Vehicle Collectors of Colorado (MVCC) withdrew its bid to host the 2010 MVPA convention. When informed of actions taken by the Board and presented with the facts, our members voted overwhelmingly to withdraw our support for this event, regardless of the consequences. The MVPA was completely caught off guard. Rather than moving forward and attempting to solve the problem, the Board placed the blame on our club and on certain individuals within the MVPA to hide the fact that their political infighting, pettiness, poor management, and poor decision-making are the real reasons why the MVCC pulled out of this event.

The MVPA (under its former name) was based here in Denver for many years; our club was one of its founding members. The MVCC hosted the 1989 convention in Denver. I attended that convention, and I can tell you there were numerous problems, resulting in several changes both within the MVPA and the MVCC. At that time, the host club was financially responsible for the convention. As a result of the problems we and other clubs faced when hosting a convention, the MVPA created the position of Convention Chairman and assumed financial responsibility for all conventions from that point forward. This was a wise decision and one that would help any host city learn from the success/failure of past conventions.

Following the 1989 convention, there was a movement to move the MVPA HQ closer to the East Coast. Those involved in this process stooped to all forms of badmouthing, personal attacks, and other forms of coercion and political double-dealing. It was personal, ugly, and had the unfortunate effect of upsetting everyone and causing many to quit the hobby. The MVCC lost many valued members. Our club was virtually wiped out following this bout of politics and barely managed to survive. As a result, many of our members loathe political gamesmanship and will avoid becoming involved in any type of activity that may hurt our club. We still have members who endured, persevered, and who remember what happened, yet we did not withdraw from the MVPA or make any attempt to coerce or blackmail anyone. Instead, we rebuilt the MVCC.

The MVCC has long considered hosting a convention, but we felt it would be a lot of work and we did not feel we had adequate resources to pull off a successful event. For many years following the 1989 convention, we lacked the manpower to plan, organize, and execute such an event. Only a few years ago, we had 25 paid members. Gradually, we rebuilt the club. Many of our members helped along the way, but our success stems largely from the efforts of two individuals who were unafraid of the challenges and who worked tirelessly to help recruit new members and add more events. Over time, we were able to expand our network of contacts, try new ideas, and participate in larger events. Our club now has more than 80 paid members and more than 250 vehicles. Last year, the MVCC participated in more than 25 major events and several smaller ones. The notion of hosting a convention had been discussed on several occasions over the past few years.

Only upon achieving what we considered to be a 'critical mass' within our membership did we feel we were ready to again host a convention. But our members still remember the struggle and the challenges we overcame; thus it was that the MVCC's officers promised our members that there would not be a repeat of the

1989 convention. We even reminded the MVPA Board of this when making our presentation at the Portland convention last summer. I guess no one was listening. The leadership of the MVCC will take no action that will purposely hurt our organization, risk what we have achieved, or jeopardize our members. The decisions made by the officers on behalf of our club are completely transparent, absent of any politics or double-dealing, are in the best interests of the organization, and our leaders have earned the respect of our members.

Over one year ago, the MVCC began working with Kenton Tucker to assist us in preparing our bid to host the 2010 MVPA Convention in the Denver area. Kenton was the MVPA Convention Chairman for more than 17 years and impressed us with his tremendous on-point experience and knowledge. His experience was so valued that when he lost his Board seat by a mere 12 votes several years ago, the Board *appointed* him to the position of Convention Chairman. It is now apparent that the very people that appointed Kenton to this position have changed their minds and sought to remove him. Why the change of heart? If there was a problem, why wasn't this brought to anyone's attention? This issue could have been addressed numerous times, at past Board meetings or at the April 2009 Board meeting, but the Board elected to dismiss Kenton immediately and without cause. There is no compelling evidence of any wrongdoing nor was any genuinely persuasive reason given for this decision. The only evidence of any problem was that certain individuals responsible for planning prior conventions refused to work with Kenton and went outside of the chain of command. Kenton's position as Convention Chairman undoubtedly caused him to say 'no' to certain individuals or proposals; it must therefore be assumed that the only real reason for his dismissal stems from other personal reasons and not as a result of his performance in his duties.

Rather than obligating affiliate members to work with Kenton, the MVPA Board allowed anyone wishing to host a convention to do whatever they wished. This inevitably undermined Kenton's authority as Convention Chairman and caused certain individuals to appeal to the Board, rather than working with Kenton as they were supposed to. Naturally, Kenton assisted those who chose to work with him, helping affiliates to negotiate favorable terms (like he did for us), and ignored the rest. Ironically, even when someone refused to work with him, Kenton continued to work behind the scenes to ensure that a convention would be successful. Many of those who refused to work with him never even realized that it was Kenton who was making things happen! Now the same people that refused to work with Kenton are among his strongest critics, accusing him of negotiating 'backdoor' deals. Is this a case of sour grapes or what? It is unfortunate that the MVPA Board did nothing to rectify this situation, choosing to remove Kenton rather than support him.

There is evidence that Kenton was disliked (that's putting it kindly) by several members within the Red Ball Club and others. These people may know Kenton, but never worked with him. Rather, they have given in to gossip, rumor, innuendo, and personal attacks. Some people have even criticized Kenton when possessing little or no knowledge of the events that caused them to feel this way – that is completely illogical. In our hobby, I always meet people who would have you believe that they know *everything*! And these people are adept at having you believe that whatever they tell you is the truth. It also seems rather ironic as none of these clubs are interested in hosting a convention and have never worked with Kenton, yet they feel entitled to criticize him. I can only conclude that a small but vocal faction within one or more of these clubs finally managed to persuade David Welch and blackmail the Board into firing Kenton. There is plenty to suggest that the Red Ball club exerted this type of pressure to force Kenton's removal.

Relative to our dealings with Kenton, he provided us with valuable insight and was instrumental in helping us to negotiate favorable terms for our convention. There were many weeks of discussions and negotiations, first to find a suitable convention venue and host hotel, and then to negotiate the detailed terms and costs. Kenton was extremely helpful in this endeavor; he even traveled to Colorado a few weeks before the Portland convention to meet us and scout the location personally. Phil Movish, our President, and I spent many hours preparing our presentation and taking the time to include *all of the information* requested by the MVPA. Our competition chose not to work with Kenton and their proposal *didn't have* all of the information requested by the MVPA. Our convention promised to be very successful, with manageable costs, new and convenient hotels located nearby, and featured a host of attractions and activities for all.

The MVCC submitted a letter of intent for the convention, signed by more than 20 of our members, which was sent to the MVPA in July of 2008. We traveled to Portland last August to make our presentation to the MVPA Board. After waiting more than 6 hours to make our presentation to the Board, we were finally allowed to proceed. Our bid included a rebate on the rooms at the host hotel, resulting in a **total cost** to the MVPA of less than \$100 (based on the average room-nights). The competing bid lacked any real detail and would have cost significantly more. Their proposal might have been more competitive had they elected to work with Kenton! In spite of this, the Board deliberated for more than 45 minutes before awarding the convention to Colorado – and the Board awarded us the convention by only one vote! However, the minutes of that meeting in Portland now shows that the vote in favor of Colorado was unanimous. This is another misleading statistic – please note that many of the Boards decisions reflect a unanimous vote – that is due to the fact that Board will often ‘force’ dissenting members to change their vote in order to give the impression that the entire Board went along with the decision. We could not understand why the MVPA, an organization that is losing money, would need to deliberate for so long when our proposal included all of the information they asked for by the MVPA and was clearly less costly and less risky. Obviously, the cost of hosting the event was a far lower priority to certain members of the Board. But as the vote was ‘unanimous,’ now we will never know who opposed granting the 2010 convention to Colorado.

Our final negotiations with the convention venue and the host hotel were completed more than three months ago. The contracts were forwarded to the MVPA by Kenton and were awaiting signature. For whatever reason, the contracts were never signed. Clearly, there was some miscommunication between Kenton and various Board members. Then suddenly and without provocation, the MVPA Board gave Kenton an ultimatum and removed him from his position as Convention Chairman. The MVPA made this decision without having *any* knowledge as to the status of the 2010 convention. The MVCC was never consulted or informed of this decision. The Board acted swiftly and did not wait for its next regularly scheduled Board meeting; rather, they conspired behind the scenes and then announced that they had held a teleconference. This decision was so important that it was made immediately, yet no one thought to ask Kenton for a progress report or to consult with us prior to taking this action. How convenient! Had the Board bothered to inquire, they would have learned that we were actively involved in tying up the last few remaining details of the convention with Kenton’s full knowledge and cooperation.

It is our understanding that only the *voting* members of the Board were consulted; none of the non-voting members were given the courtesy of being notified until *after* the decision had been made, including John Pojunos, MVPA COO and Kenton’s boss. Kenton was given an ultimatum: resign or be removed immediately. That’s a strange way to treat someone who has given so many years of service to the MVPA and who was dismissed without cause. Then he was asked to train his replacement! How insulting and absurd!

But the Board misjudged several important facts and made a series of errors along the way. They *assumed* that the convention was all wrapped up and that the contracts had been signed. They *assumed* that all of the details had been resolved. Had anyone bothered to contact either John Pojunos or Kenton, or perhaps even the MVCC, they would have known different. The Board also *assumed* that we had issues with Kenton – nothing could be further from the truth – we liked him, came to greatly welcome his perspective and advice, and had been working with him continuously since the beginning. The Board never bothered to consult anyone involved in our convention – the Board made this decision on their own and *assumed* that either the MVCC wouldn’t take issue with Kenton’s removal and that we would simply go along with it. We wrote a stern letter to David Welch protesting this decision. We took exception to the manner in which Kenton had been removed from his post; however, what we uncovered *after* his dismissal was even more absurd and alarming. David Welch is clearly using his power to sway the Board and stifle any opposition to his ‘leadership.’ The 2010 convention could have been salvaged, but the actions and behavior exhibited by certain Board members convinced us that declining the opportunity was the correct decision.

The Board has yet to admit that it made a mistake, that they misjudged the situation, or that sacking Kenton was a decision motivated by a non-public agenda; to cover their tracks they blamed anyone they could and whitewashed the facts surrounding this event. This is simply an act of misdirection. Undoubtedly, some of you may have heard various rumors – I urge you to ignore them and listen to the facts and to the people who were involved directly in these events. I also caution you to heed this warning when reading posts on various hobby-related websites. The Board now claims that 35% of MVPA affiliates refuse to work with Kenton – this is a completely false and misleading statistic. Again they made assumptions: they undermined a valuable member of the Board, they underestimated the support he has, they used him a scapegoat for their problems, and they underestimated us. The Board of Directors simply *assumed* they could keep this a secret and that everyone would go along with it; they **never** considered how others may interpret their actions or the resulting consequences.

Finally, the Board made another series of errors by making calls to certain individuals within our club and relying on their typical ‘backdoor’ tactics. Almost from the beginning, they refused to work with our officers and attempted to get these individuals to do their bidding. When that failed, they used these individuals to gather intelligence on our club and our members and then accused us of “conspiring” against them! Unbelievable! Several members of the Board also contacted one of our members in the hope that he could ‘present the facts’ and enlighten all of us. Although this individual travels to many shows and is well known to many within the MVPA, he is virtually unknown to most of our members and does not speak for them. This individual has not participated in MVCC decisions for many years even though he has been urged to do so; he knows little of our organization, our members, and knows even less about the convention or of any of the planning that took place. The Board was instructed to refrain from this type ‘backdoor’ activity, to cease calling this individual, and to direct their inquiries to our elected officers - they blatantly ignored our request and continued to contact this individual resulting in more confusion and misinformation. We cautioned the Board, specifically David Welch, that this individual did not have the authority to speak for the MVCC or any other members in our club, yet they persisted and continued to do so behind our backs.

When David Welch and his flunkies failed to persuade us, he enlisted Steve Preston from Portland to call us and do his bidding. Steve proceeded to use the telephone call as platform to badmouth Kenton. His efforts backfired – he was completely *unpersuasive*, unprofessional, and acted in bad taste. Once the Board learned that the MVCC voted to withdraw as convention hosts, they then proceeded to call certain individuals within our club to dig up additional dirt that could later be used to accuse us of forming a “conspiracy” against the MVPA. This is both preposterous and alarming, further demonstrating the level of desperation by the Board and their complete lack of ethics, morals, professionalism or character. Shame on them!

We have since learned that the Board succumbed to pressure from certain members within the Red Ball club (NY, NJ, PA) who had recently rescinded their affiliation with the MVPA and refused to return unless Kenton was removed. These individuals are effectively blackmailing the MVPA and pressuring them to remove one of their own. David Welch made this decision and the rest of the Board supported him, yet no reason has ever been given as to *why* Kenton was removed. No one defended Kenton or protested the actions of the Board. This is despicable behavior. Anyone who may have questioned this decision has been ignored; the rest of the Board simply went along with it. This is most interesting as no MVPA affiliate club in that part of the country wants to host a convention (they prefer to host regional events, keeping all profits for themselves) and Kenton has not worked with anyone from that area. One can only conclude that the Board’s decision was politically motivated. When John Varner learned of the Boards’ action, he was so shocked that he wrote a letter in protest (see attached). The Board then accused him of having violated Article 13 of the Bylaws and removed him immediately. It would appear that the current Board will do anything to stifle any form of resistance or protest.

Steve Preston called one of our members a several days ago in an attempt to get us to change our minds. His call came *after* David Welch had been informed of the MVCC’s decision to withdraw as host for the convention. His call backfired and served only to anger our member. Steve seems to think that we withdrew

our bid as the host city for the convention and pulled out “because someone’s feelings were hurt.” This demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of the situation and misses the point entirely. It also demonstrates a lack of communication among Board members on this issue. And Steve is clearly misinformed... When the MVPA failed to sign the contracts, the host hotel cancelled our reservations. This occurred within days of the MVCC’s vote to withdraw as host for the convention. It is no longer possible for Colorado to host the convention. And isn’t ironic that David Welch would appoint Steve Preston, a man who refused to work with Kenton at his own convention and who clearly has nothing nice to say about him, to work with us? Given the circumstances, Steve Preston is a poor choice to replace Kenton.

Yesterday, I also submitted a post to the G503 to explain *why* we withdrew as hosts and to clarify some misconceptions as expressed by several others on the forum. One of the responses I received was from a member of the Red Ball club, informing me that he had been present at the Board meeting in which the choice of convention sites was discussed. As this person was not a current Board member, what he claims is impossible – the Board discussed the merits of each proposal in a closed Executive Session (and all of us waited outside – I know this because I was there too). The only way he could have known what the Board discussed was because one of the other Board members told him about it *after* the meeting. Whoever that was also violated Article 13 of the Bylaws. But I doubt anyone will ever be held accountable for divulging confidential MVPA information to someone outside of the Board. Within hours of having posted my reply, the Board used its influence to have the entire post deleted and prevent anyone from knowing the truth.

The MVCC began its own investigation following Kenton’s removal. Independently, we spoke to Kenton, individual MVPA Board members, and several MVPA members across the country. Initially, we wanted to support Kenton and see if there was any way we could help him. We searched for some way to save the convention. Had David Welch or any of the Board members admitted their mistake, we would have gladly continued on as the host for the 2010 convention. However, what we learned was distasteful and shocking; the issues behind Kenton’s removal are insignificant when compared to the larger issues within the MVPA, all of which are politically motivated. The MVPA Board’s actions **are the problem**, not what the MVCC did in response to the situation. Furthermore, the resulting attitudes and actions as demonstrated by several of the Board members seeking to trash Kenton’s work and reputation, dispense blame, and cover up their deeds is what ultimately convinced us that we wanted nothing to do with this.

In response, our club voted whether to continue as convention hosts for the 2010 convention. I am proud to announce that our club voted almost unanimously to withdraw our support of the 2010 convention. Our members are fiercely independent and rarely agree on anything, yet they were disgusted by the actions of the Board. Our members refuse to become entangled in the MVPA’s ongoing political intrigue and double-dealing. This issue is no longer about defending Kenton; it is about doing the right thing. Every one of our members is extremely dedicated to our hobby and fiercely loyal to both the MVCC and the MVPA; however, our vote to cancel the convention can and should be interpreted as a ‘no confidence’ vote against the sitting MVPA Board. Their handling of this matter is offensive, unprofessional, and embarrassing to our organization. Our decision was not taken lightly, but sometimes the voice of outrage and disgust must be heard above the party propaganda. The MVPA clearly needs change, beginning with an end to non-public political Board agendas. The MVPA might also want to take responsibility for their actions and not try to blame others for their problems.

Sincerely,



Natalio Banchemo  
Vice President - MVCC