

Rolph letter to Brennan

August 19, 2015

Summer Brennan

c/o Sharon Wu

Counterpoint, LLC / Soft Skull Press

2560 Ninth Street, Suite 318

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Via Email

Dear Summer,

I read your book, and I'm very disappointed that you both disregarded the terms of our email discussion and misrepresented the facts I gave you.

When you reached out to me on February 1, 2015 via email, the first thing I asked you was: *"What specifically are you looking for from me? Off the record assessment? On the record comment? Quote?"*

You replied: *"Thanks for responding, and for asking for clarification. I am looking for input off the record, unless you wanted to be on the record."* You said the exchange was off the record, then you went ahead and attributed material to me. That is a breach of journalistic ethics.

Perhaps worse, you were not honest about what I told you. When you asked me whether Don had told Kevin he didn't plan to renew the lease (as you call it), I answered:

"Not in the way that implies. It is one of the possibilities discussed during the months of discussions about the challenges. It is not a threat made to Kevin. It is not presented as policy, or as a decision or plan. It was one of the possibilities given all the challenges. Kevin makes the natural assumption that it won't happen if the farm is in compliance."

On February 9, after quite a bit of back-and-forth, you asked about this again in a new way. You emailed:

"Yes or no."

1. Did Tom Johnson tell Kevin not just that the permit expired in 2012, but that he had been informed that NPS did not intend to renew it?

2. Did Don Neubacher at any time tell Kevin that extending the lease past 2012 was possible or probable?"

My reply to you on February 11 was:

"I managed to touch base with Kevin yesterday and the answer to both of your recent questions is YES. Kevin says that Tom Johnson was always entirely forthcoming in their conversations and certainly mentioned that Don was threatening not to offer the permit in 2012. And he says that Don was quite open with him about both possibilities. As we have discussed at length, everything was on the table during those discussions, and Kevin had the distinct impression that Don was very much in support of the oyster farm—until everything changed in early 2005, when Don flipped from support to non-support."

And yet you say in the book, attributing the information to me:

"The message I got was that, No, nobody with NPS told Kevin he could renew per se."

It's clear from the way you have constructed that sentence that you know you can't stand by the assertion.

And then it gets worse. Your next words in the book are:

"Both Tom Johnson and Don Neubacher had in fact told him that NPS did not plan to renew; he just didn't agree with that decision and hoped he could change it. He felt that the weight of the farm's legacy would win out in the end."

You're being spectacularly dishonest there. You seem to have purposely dropped the context that explains Kevin's actions. Your allegations about what Kevin "hoped" and "felt" are made up out of whole cloth. As several of us explained to you, Tom Johnson was threatened with non-renewal as a direct consequence of the farm's having been out of compliance. Since Kevin was planning to turn it around, there was every reason to believe the non-renewal threat would be dropped. I spelled this out for you over and over again. When you asked me the first time whether Tom had told Kevin that Don didn't plan to renew, I replied:

"Tom didn't have to tell Kevin. Kevin knew the permit expired in 2012, because he did his homework, and he knew that Don was worried about all the challenges because he had watched this all happen. Kevin knew that Don was considering a future non-renewal, because Don was open about that. There were months of discussion between Don and Kevin about the various challenges, the fact that the Coastal Commission was on the warpath, the potential for non-renewal, etc."

Kevin made the very natural assumption that the possibility of non-renewal was driven by the problems and issues. It's a perfectly logical assumption given everything we know about this historic resource. Who would shut down a beloved historic oyster farm AFTER it had been cleaned up? Nobody imagined that in 2004."

What you have written does not reflect a good faith effort to present the facts.

I found dozens and dozens of errors in the book, and dozens and dozens of distortions. These issues in particular seem serious enough to warrant putting on the record.

Sincerely yours,

Sarah Rolph

Cc: Elizabeth Evans, Kevin Lunny, Jack Shoemaker, Sharon Wu