

From: Ted Genoways <XXXXXXXXXXXX>  
Date: Sun, Aug 1, 2010 at 8:48 PM  
Subject: Personal and Confidential  
To: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear Friends,

I write to you today not as the editor of VQR but as a friend and colleague. I have some bad news to deliver and a favor to ask. Above all, I request you keep this in confidence for now while the events I'm about to describe are more fully investigated.

Last Friday, July 30, VQR's managing editor Kevin Morrissey died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound near the old coal tower in downtown Charlottesville. According to his family, he had set out beside him his driver's license, his will, and a suicide note blaming me.

As many of you know, Kevin and I were friends and colleagues going back to my first day at the Minnesota Historical Society Press in January 2000. We worked side-by-side on numerous projects there, and we remained good friends even after I departed MHS to return to school at the University of Iowa. When my son was born in 2002, the first flowers to arrive at the hospital were from Kevin. A year after I was hired at VQR, I was allowed to add a new position, and Kevin was at the top of my list of choices. He began work for VQR in 2004. But I never had any illusions about who Kevin was. He was prickly, mercurial, often brooding.

I accepted these parts of his personality as a small price for the work he was able to contribute-and I believed (foolishly, mistakenly) that success at VQR would bring happiness to Kevin. And, at first, it seemed to.

I will never forget the firm, enthusiastic handshake he gave me when they called out the award for General Excellence at the National Magazine Award ceremony in 2006. We were the toast of the publishing world that night; with six nominations and two wins, we received a phone call on our way out to tell us that the Washington Post would be declaring us the industry's big winner for the year. But even then, in the midst of drinks with our contributors at the post-ceremony celebration, Kevin slipped away early to his hotel room. His mood darkened in the years that followed, and nothing I did-nor anything my wife did-seemed to change that. By last year, Kevin had all but cut himself off from us socially. Where he had once been a guest at our home on Thanksgiving and Christmas, a regular companion to dinner and cooking classes and the movies, and a tireless talker about books, he now refused our every invitation and declined to talk with me about anything but what he absolutely needed from me to do his job. I don't know the exact reasons for his withdrawal. I know he felt less important to our family as my son grew from baby to boy. I know he felt less important to me professionally as our staff grew. I know that he finally came to feel trapped, paradoxically, by a job he considered too good

to quit.

As Kevin struggled through these issues, particularly in the last year, his work suffered and his demeanor, to my mind, was often unacceptable for the workplace. We feuded over this often, and the majority of the VQR staff sided with Kevin. I understand how they felt. I had sided with Kevin against a previous boss-and I have friends who worked with Kevin at other presses who came to know him as an ally against their bosses as well. For a very long time, I accepted that everyone eventually comes to hate the boss, that Kevin in particular had a history of disagreeing with his bosses, and now that I was the boss I should expect to be hated. But that tension between my staff and me grew poisonous. In the last six months, my attempts to conceal the inner conflicts of the office were unsuccessful, and many of you saw-or sensed-the unfortunate rift that grew up between us. I don't doubt that these conflicts fed Kevin's depression, but I cannot accept the final blame he laid on me. I feel unspeakably saddened by Kevin's death, but I do not feel responsible.

Nevertheless, Kevin's family has been repeatedly calling and e-mailing this weekend. They point to Kevin's suicide note. They accuse me of "workplace bullying." They have threatened me personally, promised to end my career, implied that I had some foreknowledge of Kevin's plans that would make culpable. They tell me that the majority of the staff agrees with them. And perhaps they do. One member of the staff has already given notice of his resignation. I'm told that another may be planning to do the same. By tomorrow, our staff may be half its former size-or even smaller. Even those who wish to remain may be too emotionally distraught to work and will be granted leave if they request it. But the university has asked me to do my best to deliver the Fall issue to press on time-and I feel committed to fulfilling that obligation. The issue is already largely complete-only one article remains to be filed-but I will need help with the sizable task of proofing. After that, I will have the outsize task of preparing the audio slideshows and formatting electronic files for the website, but that can wait until later in the month.

So I am asking you as friends whether you might have time to contribute in the next two weeks. To those of you out in the field, I ask only that you continue the amazing work you do for VQR-and that you have some patience with the slow pace of correspondence I expect in the coming weeks. If you are somewhere that you can take the time to read an article or two, flagging possible errors, that would be an enormous help. If you have experience with audio editing or slideshow editing tools (especially Soundslides and Final Cut), or if you know someone who does, I may need your help some time this month. If your location or current situation allow the possibility of coming to Charlottesville in the next week, please let me know. I may have some slightly larger tasks that will need attending. But don't jump in your car until you drop me a note. I'll know much more tomorrow, and we can strategize in the afternoon. I should also say that you should not hesitate to tell me if you simply don't have time to help. I'm miles behind on my own personal work, and the last thing I want is to set anyone back.

Last but not least, I hope you will not interpret this call for help as insensitive to Kevin's family, friends, and co-workers. I know only too well what they are going through, and I

expect the next few weeks to get worse before they get better. But in the best years of our friendship, Kevin and I built one hell of a magazine together, and I'm determined not to let that legacy falter in his absence.

Thank you all. And, again, please do not forward this e-mail or discuss this with friends in the publishing world. The university has asked me to contact only those people who need to know a few facts in order for me to make a call for assistance. I ask you to respect that confidence for the time being. And please direct all correspondence to this e-mail address, not my usual university account.

My thanks and deepest love to all of you. You've become my extended family in recent years, and I'm grateful to each and every one of you for your friendship, comradery, and hard work. You make this work possible. You make it worthwhile.

Take care,

Ted Genoways

PS-I know that I am behind on work I owe many of you, as well. I will be working as hard as I can to get caught up on those responsibilities.