

My name is AnnaMarie Knorr and this is my declaration regarding Representative David Cook as it pertains to accusations made against him through the Arizona State House Ethics Committee.

Representative Cook has been accused of carrying on an inappropriate relationship with me and the accusation is based on media reports from the Yellow Sheet and claims that his work, voting record, etc were compromised by this alleged affair.

The accusation isn't just hearsay, it is completely false. It is based on media reports of rumors spread by my own father, Bas Aja, and based in large part on letters written by Representative Cook and his wife Diana to me while I was in rehab, dealing with an alcohol addiction. Those letters were stolen from me by my soon-to-be ex-husband and given to my father, who proceeded to shop them to a variety of media outlets in an effort to financially and professionally isolate me, and to punish David and Diana for being my protectors over this last long time.

My story is personal and should not be anyone's business. But thanks to the deliberate damage already done and still being done by my own father, I have no real choice except to tell my story to a committee of Legislators, most of whom I have known for a considerable time, who are investigating this matter.

I have been friends with the Cooks for several years and, like my father, was very fond of them both. They are quality people and we share similar backgrounds in terms of our ranching/agricultural upbringing. My father recruited David to run for office and I was happy for them both when David got elected.

I did not lobby David Cook on any issues or ask him to vote in support or opposition to any legislation.

When David got his DUI in December 2018, I was glad to be able to help David and Diana during this time, doing small things like helping David get to work during the period that he was without a driver's license, etc. David later told me that the further he got from his days of drinking too much, the more he realized that I was drinking too much myself. In truth, problems in my own marriage had contributed to my own drinking problem. David and Diana supported me during this difficult time and they made sure that I knew that I had friends who cared for me and loved me.

If you have ever been isolated by your own family members, if you have ever had a parent tell you that you are worth nothing to them, if you have ever been targeted for personal harm by the people you grow up believing loved you implicitly, then you know how important it is to have people who really care and who have your back. For me, it was David and Diana Cook.

I have said before, and I will likely repeat it again in the future, if it wasn't for the Cooks and their support, I do not know how I would have gotten through this difficult time.

Of course, this only made them a greater enemy in the eyes of my father and husband. I couldn't be bullied, and I couldn't be cowed because I wasn't alone, no matter how hard they tried to convince me otherwise.

The hardest time for me was when I entered rehab and for 45 days, I was left completely alone by everyone who claimed to love me - except my children and the Cooks. David wrote me some letters when I first arrived, because of his experience working in the prison system and knowing what it meant to people who received mail from their family. I told him how much I appreciated the mail and that it helped me make it through. Most days, it was short postcards that they had in their house. But these communications were the only contact I had from the outside world and a postcard wasn't enough. I asked for longer letters and they did the best they could. David explained that he was glad to be able to turn the lessons he had learned dealing with his own issues into something positive. He wrote from the heart and told me what he knew I needed to hear.

These letters meant the world to me.... Other than a letter, my only contact each day was a fixed amount of time I was allowed for phone calls and I used that time to talk to my kids. If I had time left I'd call the Cooks and usually reach Diana. They never failed to encourage me and to remind me that in spite of the horrible people in the world there was still a lot of good, and I needed to get well to get to experience it, and to make sure that my kids got to experience it as well.

Their help paid off, I finished rehab, returned home, and knew it was time to make permanent improvements in my life.

As badly as some in my family had behaved up to this point, I never imagined that those letters would be taken and pushed out into the public to try and prop up a disgusting lie about me and David. Yet I began to receive questions from newspaper reporters and others, asking me about them. I explained to them in limited detail that those letters were written at my request and only during rehab, that there was no illicit relationship, that the Cooks were dear friends, and that this was part of a deliberate effort to cost me my job, my livelihood, my remaining friends, and any hopes of my independence. To their collective credit, no reporter that spoke to me first ever ran that garbage story.

Eventually my husband and father found someone who would run it without talking to me, and sometime later, when I was with my daughter in the hospital--she was recovering from heart surgery--my father emailed me the Yellow Sheet so I could know what he had done. Once that dam burst, the rest of the media outlets reported a version of it, with some of them using the comments I had given them back when they first contacted me. So some stories were awful and full of untruths, others at least offered a quote or two from me. My soon to be ex husband propped the front page AZ Republic article on the cot next to my daughter's hospital bed to make sure I would see their handy work.

It is important to note that David and Diana had no such restrictions. They could have said what they wanted, they could have given media interviews, they could have gone on television, but they didn't. As David told several reporters, there was a story to tell, but it wasn't his story to tell, it was mine.

David and Diana Cook could have made their own lives a lot easier by walking away from me a long time ago. They could have made their own lives a lot easier by airing my dirty laundry to explain that they were the heroes in the story, not the villains. But they didn't. They stayed true and for that I will always be grateful.

There was never an inappropriate relationship. There was never anything improper or unethical.

To the contrary, the Cooks have gifted me with their love in the most Christian and compassionate of ways. If more people took care of their friends and looked after their fellow man in such a way the world would be an amazing place.

For the purposes of this declaration I will set aside the numerous other things my soon-to-be-ex and especially my father have done to target me and the Cooks. There will be an appropriate time and setting for that in the future.

What I can say now is that anyone who has believed my father's fable has been conned by a man who was so proud of his handiwork in trying to destroy his own daughter, that he emailed it to her while she was in the hospital, caring for her own daughter, while just over four (4) months sober.

You don't need to know anything more about what kind of a man he is, other than that he is that kind of man.

With regard to the second complaint about bribery and tax seizures, it is similarly garbage. At no time in my presence did Representative Cook ever ask anyone to do me any favors, offer any bribes, or take any actions on my behalf. Nor did he ever discuss any of those things with me.

I trust the Committee and its myriad investigators are smart enough to connect the dots from my father and soon-to-be-ex-husband to the two individuals who filed these malicious complaints.

SIGNED ON THE 24th OF APRIL, 2020


ANNA MARIE KNORR