

and opinions on how the store should be run. She helped compile a list of demands to smooth things out at the store. That list included: Ironplow taking a leave of absence from her board position, to give everyone some breathing room. Ironplow agreed. Staff also wanted no personnel changes through the process, meaning Stabin and staff remained and no new manager was hired.

Ironplow was not to work in the store. "She was considering herself staff and board and that was becoming complicated because of power dynamics," says Frye. "It was like, 'I'm just like you but please put three pieces of tape on this sign instead of two.'" Meanwhile, Frye was thinking, "I'm just a staff member, but no, you're a board member with power and you sign my paycheck."

The staff also wanted a larger board, picked by a three-person advisory committee who would select three more board members, according to Frye.

The mediation failed. Interruptions and arguments ensued. Stabin walked out.

Everyone questioned whether the board's actions were feminist. It was, after all, a feminist bookstore.

Frye says the staff did all the compromising, while Ironplow says she met all of the staff's demands, including benefits. Staff earned benefits if they worked a minimum of 19 hours per week, which some were allowed to do and others not. The manager was given sick and vacation leave.

To solve the board/staff dispute, Frye looked for the bylaws, which she could not find. Frye says Ironplow told her she lost them, but Ironplow says they were there, just out of date.

"We were promised by Barb Ryan the bylaws would not be adjusted until there was a new board. That promise was not followed. Bylaws were rewritten to continue their power," says Frye.

Ironplow says the staff was invited to a meeting with a lawyer to rewrite the bylaws and to have input into the rewriting, but no one showed up.

Staff reached out to the community, to hold a meeting to inform them of what was going on. But Ironplow called her own meeting, same place, same time, and asked the staff to call off theirs. The staff did.

'We were trying to mensches about it. We cared about the store'

-TOVA STABIN

"We were trying to be mensches about it," says Stabin. "We cared about the store."

The summer passed to fall and school began again.

The stress of coursebooks week is intense. "It's what killed Izzie," says Ironplow. "She died a week after, from a brain aneurysm and high blood pressure."

In that week, says Stabin, the store brought in \$70,000 in three days. Staff worked grueling 12-hour days. Stabin was given notice that her resignation was still in effect but that she could work through mid-November.

The staff was outraged, feeling she'd been fired. Ironplow says she wasn't fired, that she and Ryan were putting off the decision on what to do

about her position, and leaving it for the new board to decide upon. The new board was to take over in November, when Ironplow was to leave.

The staff walked out in protest. No one watched the store.

Ironplow called them in, told them to hand in their keys. They were fired.

There was no community protest.

"On Saturday, me and my co-worker and former worker spent a good 10 hours putting things into order for the new staff and we left. We walked up to Lorraine and gave her our keys and our credit card for ordering books. She said 'thank you' and we walked out. I

addressed at the store."

"It's true I have more class privilege," says Ironplow. "But the store needed me financially and I was the only one who knew the big picture of how it worked. I worked for free, doing books, computers, taxes, evening staffing. It was hard to find reliable people to do that."

Ironplow thought that Stabin took her desire for Stabin to be a better sales manager to be an indication she thought the staff wasn't doing a good job, and that's a "misunderstanding," she says. "It's easy to overestimate the extent of your own abilities. That's what both Tova and I did." In fact, she adds, "Everyone was busting their butts."

"Give me the power to transform my anger and frustration into clear and powerful action, that I may create healing change in myself and the world."

Why the first staff didn't unionize is the question on many minds. First, Stabin, as manager, couldn't have legally done so, according to NLRB's Jacobs. Furthermore, says Stabin, "we thought it would be a real ugly way for the store to die." And, she adds, "I don't know if we had enough time to make that happen before losing our jobs. But we chose not to. We chose to negotiate through community members."

Stabin also says she didn't want the story splayed out all over the press. "We're a targeted community as it is," she says. "There was also this feeling of, 'this can't happen to us.'"

Part 2 of this story will continue next week. **EW**

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