

6231 Annan Trail
Los Angeles 42, Calif.
February 23, 1956

Dear Mrs. Williams:

I have been informed that some person unknown to me in the Campfire Girls organization has received a letter from me demanding that my name be "cleaned up"; and that as a result of this letter a meeting is to be held to determine whether or not I am a fit person to continue as sponsor for the chapter of which my daughter, Mitzi, is a member.

I wish you to know that at no time in my life have I written such a letter to any person or organization, for I have never considered my name to be dirty. If such a letter from me is in existence, it is a forgery. If no such letter exists, then the person or persons claiming to have received it are guilty of a shocking violation of the truth. In either of the above events, the responsible person is ethically and morally unfit to be placed in a position of authority over young and impressionable children, lest the children themselves learn to forge and to lie.

The trouble apparently stems from certain circumstances in the life of my husband. For many years he was a writer in motion pictures. During this time he was extremely active in the affairs of his trade union, the Screen Writers Guild, of which he was a director, and founding editor of the Guild's magazine. He also wrote a pamphlet defending the union leader, Mr. Harry Bridges. (It is interesting here to note that the United States Supreme Court last year agreed with what my husband wrote of the Bridges case fourteen years ago, and has dismissed all charges against Bridges and his union.)

During his Hollywood career, my husband was also active in the affairs of the Democratic Party. He worked closely with John B. Elliot, Rollin McNitt, and Mike Fanning, later postmaster. During the 1944 presidential campaign he was national chairman of Writers for Roosevelt. In 1946 he was active in the campaign of Attorney-General Robert W. Kenny, Democratic candidate for Governor of California against Mr. Warren. In 1945 he was called to the United Nations Organization Conference in San Francisco to assist Secretary of State Stettinius in preparation of his public speeches, and received the thanks of the Secretary and an autographed photograph.

In 1947, however, a Republican Congress was in control of the house, and my husband and nine other Hollywood persons were called before the House Un-American Activities Committee and asked the question: "Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?" My husband stood on the First Amendment and denied the Committee's right to inquire into any area relating to personal or political or religious belief. He thereby deliberately invited a court test of a basic constitutional issue. He was indicted for contempt of Congress, tried,

convicted, and after a long legal struggle, sent to a Federal Correctional Institution for a term of ten months.

In the course of this long court battle my husband and his co-defendants received support and commendation and friendly counsel from such outstanding persons as Albert Einstein, Nobel Prize winner Linus Pauling, Nobel Prize winner Thomas Mann, Pulitzer Prize winner Arthur Miller, pianist ~~Abhur~~ Rubenstein, pianist Artur Schnabel, Norman Mailer, Dorothy Parker, twenty-two professors from the Yale University Law School, and numerous other distinguished citizens. It was not a simple issue: it was a political issue of great importance, and a very considerable body of persons supported my husband's position, and still support it, and are confident that the Supreme Court will within the very near future establish that my husband was right in his approach to the problem, and that the courts of that period were wrong.

My husband was sent to a Federal Correctional Institution---not a Federal Penitentiary: he was convicted not of a felony, but of a simple misdemeanor: he suffered no loss of voting or any other civil rights as a result of the ordeal, and his crime was of such a minor nature that he is not required by any law even to register ~~asa~~ former convict. The chairman of the committee which succeeded in sending him to prison---Congressman J. Parnell Thomas of New Jersey---was later discovered defrauding the government of money, was tried, was convicted of a felony, and was sentenced to two years in a Federal Penitentiary. This was the quality of the man who destroyed my husband's career, and these are the facts of the only crime ever charged against my husband.

There is, however, much more to a human life than one single act. A life is the sum total of many years, and since his family is to be judged by what he---rightly or wrongly---did at a certain time, I am sure those who do the judging would wish to know the rest of the story, beyond that single act. Therefore, I add the following information for consideration:

My husband's novel "Johnny Got His Gun" was acclaimed by every publication in the United States, and won the National Booksellers' Award for that year. He has written for such magazines as Liberty, The Saturday Evening Post, McCall's Magazine, and many others. During his Hollywood career he wrote more than twenty-five films, two of which produced Academy awards.

Not one of his films ever corrupted the mind of a child, for he refused throughout his career to write anything dealing with gangsters, murder, adultery, rape, or physical violence. An annual convention of Juvenile Court Judges publicly commended his work in films for its constructive effect upon American youth. His film "Our Vines Have Tender Grapes", starring Margaret O'Brien and Edward G. Robinson, was awarded a silver medal by Parents' Magazine as the most wholesome entertainment of the year for the whole family. During the war the Chaplain-General of the United States Navy asked him to supervise a group of training films for the Navy, the object being to bring high moral val-

ues emphasizing home life to young men widely separated by war from their families, and subject to many temptations. The Chaplain-General explained in his letter that he wished my husband, because he, above all other writers in motion pictures, had emphasized home values and decency in all his films.

Two of his films---"A Guy Named Joe" and "Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo"---were commended by the government for their "magnificent patriotism", and have just been re-released after twelve years as MGM Masterpieces. They played at the Park Theatre only a week ago, and I am certain that no one who saw them would fear to have her children see them also. In the midst of the war Winston Churchill cabled President Roosevelt to be sure and see "The Remarkable Andrew", written by my husband from his own novel, since Churchill said the film was a morale-lifter. The proceeds from the English publication of "The Remarkable Andrew" were contributed by my husband in their entirety to the Lord Mayor's Fund for the Relief of Bombed-Out Children of London. During the war he also contributed tens of thousands of dollars to the Red Cross and the USO.

Being over military age, he went to the Pacific as a War Correspondent in 1945, and accompanied the armed forces in air raids over Japan, as well as in the last amphibian invasion of the war in Balikpapan, Borneo. During the period he was in jail, our eldest daughter won the American Legion's school award for good citizenship. For over seventeen years he has been a loyal husband and a devoted father to our three children. If such a man is "disloyal", or if his family is to be punished in 1956 for a legal tussle in which he engaged nine years earlier in 1947---then I, a third generation native Californian, have sadly mistaken the meaning of America and the quality of decency which I have always felt sustained it.

I have never concealed any of the essential facts of my marriage from my neighbors, and I have never solicited for myself any position in any organization in this community. When I have been called upon to help, I have gladly helped, seeking no reward but that of doing my best for such children as have come temporarily under my care.

During all of last year I drove the Bluebirds to and from their meetings, and threw my home open to them whenever it was desired. When I was asked to become a sponsor of the Campfire Girl group of which my own daughter is a member, I naturally accepted. I do not think I have corrupted the minds of these children, nor ever failed in my obligation to care for their safety while they were with me. Some of the children have been overnight guests in our home, as Mitzi has been in their's---and I believe the best evidence of my character as a mother might come from the lips of those children who have been in my care, and from their mothers, who are in a position to know whether or not their children were harmed by contact with me.

It is therefore shocking and painful to me that I should be the object of secret letters and the subject of confidential meetings. I have read very carefully the literature of the Bluebirds and

the Campfire Girls, and I find there a high devotion to honor and fair play and truthfulness. But I can find no evidence of honor or fair play or truthfulness in the secret charges that are now secretly being considered. And I am bound to ask myself this question: can an organization which tolerates forged letters and secret charges be trusted to instill in the minds and hearts of young children the very virtues which it violates itself? My position therefore has to be this: I have sought no preferment. I have been asked to serve. I have served. Now that there appear anonymous persons who wish to banish me from any contact with an organization of which my daughter is a member---how can I permit such a thing to happen without the strongest protest against its cruelty, and against the kind of persons who stoop to such methods?

In conclusion, permit me to say this: if a letter has been sent over my name, it is a forgery. Forgery is a major crime in the state of California. If the letter has been sent through the mail, then a Federal crime has been committed. If the letter is simply a story that has been invented, then the invention of the lie itself is a crime, punishable at law. No matter how it is viewed, a felony has been committed here, and I am bound to investigate the felony as fully as possible, and to determine what criminal complaints can be filed against the perpetrator.

My husband was convicted and sentenced for a mere misdemeanor. Am I now to be humiliated and tried and sentenced on the evidence of persons who are themselves guilty of felonies? My husband has paid for his misdemeanor years ago: am I not in honor justified in asking that the forger in our midst---or, if there is no letter, then the bearer of false evidence---likewise be punished, rather than I, who have done nothing but give my services when they have been requested? Are we all so free of blame that we can drag down another on the basis of such evidence? And does not the Golden Rule, which I have accepted all my life as a supreme law of human conduct, apply to the Campfire Girls, to me, to my children, as it should apply to all persons everywhere?

Cordially,