

May 8, 1957

Mr. Douglas H. McDonald
Suite 101-106 Biggs Building
216 West Broadway
Princeton, Indiana

Dear Doug:

My ability of expression is inadequate to tell you how delighted I was to receive your letter of April 30 and to hear from you again. It has been a long time since we were at the JAG School together, and your letter is further evidence that this is quite a small world we live in in that the Nickerson case and your close friendship with Mayor Ralph Wiltsie of Princeton has brought us together again.

As you no doubt have seen in the papers, the court-martial proceedings against Colonel Nickerson have been continued until June 25, 1957, and because of the likelihood of this continuance I feel reasonably certain that the trial counsel refrained from issuing any subpoenas to Mr. Wiltsie or any of our other witnesses for the May 15 date.

We deeply appreciate your letter which was received along with letters from several other of our witnesses, most of which were accompanied by expressions of indignation that the trial counsel would write them such a letter. It so happens that Lt. Col. Barry, the trial counsel, and a young Captain Taylor, who is quite able but inclined to be somewhat of a smart alec, have full intentions of making quite a name for themselves out of the Nickerson trial. I am afraid they have seen the Billy Mitchell movie too many times and hope to capitalize as the TJA did in that particular case. Just between us, I seriously doubt that any spectacular careers will be carved out of the trial of John Nickerson.

In reality, Mr. Wiltsie should answer Barry's letter to the effect that it is none of his damn business, but the dictates of good taste might make another answer more suitable. I would simply suggest to Mr. Wiltsie, if I were in your place, to answer this letter simply to the effect that he served with and under Colonel Nickerson in World War II; that he knows his character and other fine characteristics under the most adverse and trying conditions and is prepared to testify to this effect. Then I would add as to other evidence, if any, he will state that under oath from the stand. I would let my answer end at this point.

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Unfortunately, I have not run into too many of our old JAG School friends. I do see Lazarus every few years on trips to New York, as he is still attorney for Paramount Pictures and has an office in the Paramount Building on Times Square. Junior Williams, who practices law in Birmingham, I do get to see quite often. You may or may not recall Daye Sugg of Fayetteville, Tennessee, who was in the OCS Class and who was purportedly mixed up in the difficulty on final examinations and was denied graduation (his part in which I always seriously doubted), managed to get himself killed on the court house square in Fayetteville about a year ago when he and his father-in-law engaged in a gun battle that would have made Deadwood, South Dakota look rough in 1840. It was a most unfortunate event because Daye, in addition to being a very fine lawyer, was a splendid person.

Carolyn joins me in sending our warmest and most cordial regards and if ever you are in this section of the Southeast, please plan to stop by with us for as long as you can stay. I get to Indianapolis fairly often, as we represent the P. R. Mallory Company, who has a plant here in Huntsville. In fact, I will be in Indianapolis for the races the end of this month as the guest of the Mallory officials and on one of these occasions I sincerely hope that I can run over and have lunch with you. My schedule will be tight on this trip, but I hope we can plan it for a later date.

Thanking you again for your letter, and with warmest personal regards, I am

Always sincerely yours,

Robert K. Bell

RKB:mfl