

February 5, 1958

Colonel and Mrs. John C. Nickerson, Jr.
Engineer Section, USAR CARIB
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Dear John and Carol:

I have been planning to write you for some time, but the press of things here has somehow prevented me from doing so. I assure you, nevertheless, that a day never passes but what we not only think of you but discuss you both at home, in the office and with our friends about town.

Of course, the events of last Friday night have changed a lot of things in these United States, and particularly in Huntsville. There was a tremendous, spontaneous celebration which packed the court house square with thousands of people, one of the features of which was burning Charlie Wilson in effigy; and as an article in the attached clippings will illustrate, I am confident they would have burned him in person had he been here.

We have tried to save pertinent clippings from several newspapers to give you a little better background of the receptions the launching received, not only here in Huntsville, but in Birmingham, Nashville, Atlanta, etc. These clippings not only have a great deal to say about the launching, its significance and its future; but each and every one of them has a good deal to say about John C. Nickerson and how he has grown in stature since June of 1957 when he was tried by a General Court at Redstone. With all the pleasure and the good that we see in this successful launching on the part of our local Army team, there is a great deal of disappointment and distastefulness to me because of the way some of these apes are acting and who they are taking on over; and I might say that our friend Bierne, along with others, are in the vanguard in this parade. They are heaping their praise on our one "John Brucie"; but they seem to forget who is responsible for the organization of this team, who not only got them together and brought them to Huntsville and who directed the development of the Redstone which is the basis on which Jupiter-C was built. They act as though General Toftoy had no part in the entire program except to possibly hold the door open for Medaris when he wanted to take a little trip across the Arsenal. They also seem to forget who fought the battles to get these various projects for Redstone, who is responsible for the Redstone Missile being assigned to this team and who carried the proposals to Washington trying to get the

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satellite program here. They also seem to forget the fact that it was John C. Nickerson who saved the Jupiter program and saved the bright future that is now Redstone Arsenal's and ABMA's. When I say "they" I assure you I refer to a very small group of hot buddies who are trying to nudge a little closer to the throne and not the rank-and-file of people here who fully know and appreciate the tremendous debt of gratitude not only we here in Huntsville but the entire Western World owe to John C. Nickerson's stand following the Wilson Memorandum.

Last Saturday following the successful launching, I received calls from newspapers from New York to California asking for expressions of my views as to the vindication of Colonel Nickerson. I had very little to say to practically every one of these callers, as has been the case over a period of several months. When such calls come I have referred them to Uncle Ray, because he loves to see his name in the paper and hear the sound of his own voice as much or more than any man I have ever known. He has thrived and fattened himself over a period of months, and I will have to confess that I have enjoyed his various comments. However, when this boy Keel from the "Nashville Tennessean" called me late Saturday afternoon, I had had just about as much as I could take so I expressed a few views which you will find set forth on page 10 of the enclosed "Nashville Tennessean," Sunday, February 2.

Numerous Congressional leaders, such as your own Kentucky Congressman Watts and Estes Kefauver, have had a great deal to say about Nickerson and the need for his return. Our mutual friend, General Almond, has practically made a career of writing the National Commander of the American Legion, the VFW, the Chief of Staff, the White House aides and others in your behalf; and I happen to know that the mid-winter conference of the VFW meeting in Anniston later this month is coming up with a very strong resolution and demand in your behalf. General Almond will be in the midst of the discussion and you can rest assured that he will needle them into using some very strong words.

Please write us again in the not too distant future, because we thoroughly enjoyed your last letter and your Christmas card. As stated earlier, we think of each of the six of you very often and most fondly; and you can also rest assured that we miss the fifth member of our law firm who put in such regular attendance here in the office from January 1 through June of 1957.

Wishing for each of you the very best and assuring you of our devotion and admiration, in which Carolyn and everyone here in the office join, I am

Always sincerely yours,

RKB:mfl
Enclosures

Robert K. Bell