

July 31, 1963

Mayor Ivan Allen

Atlanta, Ga.

Dear Sir;

It is not my custome to comment personally to public officials, But your appeal before the Senate Commerce Committee in behalf and support of the accomadations bill has deeply impressed my husband and me.

We came here six years ago from a small town in Wisconsin. We had failed abusiness we had owned and operated for over thirty years. We were ill, tired, old and hopeless. In six years we have regained our confidence fallen in love with the South and tried to take our place as good citizens of Atlanta.

As we have always been eager and active participants in civic progress and government in any area in which we lived we found it no different here.

We came here with the same fairy tale impression of the South that most Northern people have, were relieved to find there was something much more substantial in the picture. There was a spirit of rebirth in Atlanta that thrilled us to death. We felt there was a great job to be done and a need for much help to do it, even ours.

In our skid from riches to rags we lost all the old reliable props. Learning to live without them was at first a problem. We adopted a tongue in cheek attitude because there was much for us to learn before we were qualified to express an opinion.

We were repipients of the wonderful Southern hospitality, we still are providing we are willing to agree or do not express an opinion. Eventually we discovered our tongues were not in our cheeks but between our teeth. Thus we lost a privilege we'd enjoyed all our lives, freedom to speak.

It didn't take us long to rebel against this situation. Because we felt there was nothing to be gained by imposing our opinions on people who were not interested in hearing them we decided to learn through communication between ourselves

and Southerners in all walks of life. We listen and ask questions, we extend our hands in friendship to all we meet without regard to race or color. We feel it is not enough to "Love thy neighbor"--but one must also be "Thy brothers keeper!" Bigoted, prejudiced people leave us deeply frustrated but the failure of bonified leaders to speak up is positively frightening. Such men as, Ralph Mc Gill, the former Mayor Hartsfield, Gov. Sanders and yourself to mention only a few have been a constant source of comfort to us and many others. Mr. Sandman and I as converted Southerners want you to know how much we appreciate your outstanding leadership.

Mr. Sandman is employed as a salesman at Boomershine Pontiac. I teach creative art crafts in Atlanta and all over the State of Georgia.

In my work I often do courses and workshops in the Recreation Centers. I always ask to work with their colored directors. This I must do on a segregated basis. However, I am very happy that I have found this means of communication with the colored race. I have found many intelligent, fine people among these people. I often go out and do a work shop in their centers. Some times I work with as many as seventy five to a hundred little colored children---other times I work with their senior citizens. I also work with people in this area among the white race. There is no difference as far as I can determine, they are all eager and grateful for my services and I am thankful that I have something to give.

Many of my husbands customers are colored people. It is the custome when a car is sold to extend your hand in congratulations. However, if your customer is a negro you plave your hand in your pocket. Mr. Sandman has never done this, he always extends the same curtesy regardless of race or color. If he were not respected for his record as a salesman he would probably be called a "niger lover!" He has met some mighty fine people in this way. For these reasons we feel that lack of communication between the races is the root of all trouble.

All our lives Mr. Sandman and I have seemed to have but one outstanding talent. We are definitely prone to people who need help. We attract them like fly-paper attracts flies. We seem to have a particular attraction to the young. Twelve little waifs grew to adulthood along with three of our own, in Wisconsin. They still look on us as their parents.

Soon after we came to Atlanta (although my husband had carefully explained that we must finally think only of ourselves) I ran across a beautiful dilapidated old Southern mansion in the "Tara" variety. I felt that we just had to have it because "wonderful things would happen here!" Though my husband thought I had lost my mind and we hadn't a cent with which to buy this old monstrosity, two weeks later we had moved in. I had promised Sandy that it would be a good income house. The house had been vacant for several years and the owner who lived out of town was so eager to sell that he agreed to let us move in with the stipulation that within two months we would devise a way to start monthly payments which were ridiculously high. By rather unconventional but legal methods I found the means to meet this obligation on schedule. Actually I feel that practically everything that has happened here has been with God's magic alone. We don't only believe in miracles we expect them.

Shortly after we set up the means to meet our big monthly payments I involved us in a way that has changed our home from an income ^Nventure to an out-go non profit "Old Woman in the Shoe" venture. Now my husband is "poor Pop" (literally). Somehow we have acquired sixteen beautiful southern teen age daughters. This came about through our association with a local Child Care Association. These kids come at the rate of two or three per year. They are placed in our home at the time they graduate from high school or become eighteen. The Agency provides vocational training which usually takes one year. They have grown to adulthood unadaptable, unloved, often abused. They are scarred by experiences beyond comprehension, their deep rooted fears have caused them to

develope a protective shell so thick it is almost impossible to penetrate. Unless you can find some way to get through to them they will quite likely wind up as a statistic in a prison or a detention or mental institution.

Besides our work with sixteen girls we have done considerable research in this great and urgent area of need. I have a good ~~many~~ amazing and heart breaking statistics regarding the average child care institution where these children grow up. Also the large percentage of foster homes which are not properly approved or supervised. This ~~is~~^{is} due largely to lack of trained personnal also the employment of indifferent house mothers and attendents in an area where dedication is needed. If you had ever lived with the products of societies belt line provision for these forgotten, homeless children of the world you would understand why Pop and Mom Sandman feel a compulsion to help do something constructive for them.

As you may have suspected I am addicted to writing. This started in high school and in college my instructors felt sure I had a real aptitude for some form of writing. However, I became an art teacher in Wisconsin Schools, a profession I followed briefly before my marriage but returned to several years before we moved to Atlanta. I continued to write but until recently ~~it~~ it was the secret journal variety. Hiding your creations under the rug, the mattress, the Sunday linen isn't much of an insentive ~~to~~ improve. Despite the fact that any ability I might have ~~had~~ possessed at that time I am aware that under the circumstances I have surely regressed, still for the first time I feel compelled to make myself heard on this subject.

The sixteen girls who have come to us through the agency are now as dear to us as our own family, in fact only by making them a member of our family can we break through this terrible shell. The first few months are truly difficult and only with God's help can we find the wisdom and courage to stick by them until they accept our love. Though most of them are married by now they continue to need the parental relationship to accept the responsibilities of independence and self support as well as to find happiness in marriage.

For the time being we have had to discontinue our custome of adding two or three per year to our family. Our responsibilities both emotional and financial to these girls ~~is~~ staggering. Mr. Sandman and I have managed to meet our obligations to date by working both night and day. Life here in our old mansion is terribly exciting, happy and no little bit fantastic. True to my premonition "wonderful things have happened".

My work has grown very popular with the garden clubs, church women, sororities, civic groupes----I have created a sort of rediculous image for myself---people have accepted it, in fact my services are much in demand. I am glad because with each fee I collect ~~makes~~ it ^{is} possible to accomplish that much more in our real area of interest.

I have been striving to open a showcase to display and sell, not only my creations but also to use for an outlet for many forms of Arts and crafts I've run across in my experience teaching. Through an impulsive little add I placed in last weeks paper I have found a groupe of wonderful people here in Atlanta who are anxious to band together to participate in this venture to accomplish together what most of us have tried to do for years. Although the Showcase will be set up here in our funny old house there is a wide area of interest which includes the entire city. Most of us are unknowns, some are handicapped and confined to their homes, others are senior citizens----others are very well known artists who although they have enjoyed considerable success are still interested and anxious to help. This is much appreciated by people on the Southwest side of Atlanta as there are very few galleries or facilities of this sort in this area.

The last of the week Doris Lockerman of The Constitution is writing an article about this undertaking. I guess I threw an arrow and it turned out to be a boomerang. As I say most of us are undiscovered but who knows, maybe through our efforts perhaps someone will find recognition ~~for~~ ^{and make a} lovely contribution to the world of beauty? Anyway it is exciting and worth while.

Ruth Kent who, as you know has the "Today Show" on WSB, is a very dear friend of mine. I have appeared many times on her show, usually to do an Art Craft demonstration. She is very interested in our work with homeless children and often does things to help me for that reason. I will soon appear on that program with another guest to "plug" our Atlanta Showcase. Everything in our showcase will be an Atlanta Creation and all the arts will be represented---there will be a wide variety reaching from the most distinctive fine arts to the more decorative, useful arts---there will be reproductions of old crafts but no antiques--it must be the work of present day creative people.

Actually our urgent need of means to continue our work with homeless children mothered this invention of my imagination but out of it has grown an opportunity to help in many other areas. I wish you could have seen the dear little woman I called on yesterday. She had called me to find out what the add was all about. She was seventy five, could not come to me but she was so eager to show me her creations and to participate in this venture that I told her I would come to see her. She doesn't need an outlet for her work (paints beautiful china) ~~but she needs~~ for financial gain but being able to take an active part in this venture has made her feel more of a part of this world, she had begun to withdraw and feel no longer needed as so many older people. I will go and get her creations, take her supplies and help her feel a part of the Showcase. I also have many handicapped people who will make contributions in the same way.

We have found a whole new way of life through our work here in Atlanta. It all began with love of God. Now we have learned the power of love we are anxious to share it with others. It could make the world go around in peace.

Admittedly there are times the load is a little heavy. We begin to feel our burdens instead of our joys. We feel sorry for ourselves and are slightly rebellious-----Then someone like you takes a gallant step forward as you did this last week and were up and at 'em again--"Onward Christian Soldiers!"

Most Sincerely, *Maxine Sandman*