

Atlanta, Georgia  
25 October 1967

Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr.,  
City Hall  
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Mayor Allen:

I hesitate to interrupt your busy day, but feel that you would like to know what goes on within your Police and Parks Departments.

First, let me say that I am a tax payer. Have owned my home and paid taxes for twenty-one years.

Recently, two things have occurred which have caused me much distress and inconvenience, and which I feel definitely are police matters and which also concerns the Parks Department. The police have taken no action other than to come out and look the situation over. I would like to know if a tax payer is entitled to protection for I need help very badly. I am a widow and live alone.

For many weeks now I have been the victim of vandalism. I have had some construction work, under contract, and redecoration done on my house. The painter did not return my key, even when asked to do so. I understand that the contractor did not pay him for his work, and so he has evidently been trying to destroy the work and me along with it.

One afternoon I came home from my office to find that some sort of substance had been sprayed on the bathroom walls and the tub was completely covered with it. I felt it and it seemed to be a substance very like shellac with oil and a white substance added. I was distressed and called the police department. An officer arrived, saw the condition of things and called the Crime Prevention Department. Officer B. R. Owens then came out. He told me to wash the substance out of the tub with soap and water, made a few notes regarding some items that were missing from the house, and departed. He did not even examine the storm door through which the vandals had to enter, even though they had a key to the door leading into the house. The storm door was locked and I told the officer that it appeared to have been tampered with as there were scratches on the lock. He said I might have done it, which I did not. It was a new lock. He then said he felt the matter was not one the police should handle, but that he would send me a report on his findings. That was around the 22 of September and to this date I have not had a report from Officer Owens, which I need for insurance purposes.

However, I washed the tub out with soap and water, as advised,

and took a bath. Immediately my skin burned like fire and became very red. After the redness disappeared, I became aware that my face and entire body was covered with a coating of shellac or plastic-like substance, which has entirely closed the pores of the skin. This substance wont come off and my dermatologist has prescribed many treatments to no avail so far. It is making me ill. My face feels as though it was covered with a mud pack, which had dried, then could not be removed.

The painter, whom I suspect of committing this atrocity, is free, and no one has even bothered to investigate him. I've had no police protection at all and not even the courtesy of a report so I could file my claim with the insurance company for the missing items taken from my home. I have called the police many times, requesting this report and all I get is a promise or am told Officer Owens is off-duty. Will you please try to help me?

I can't remove the substance from my bath tub, lavatory or kitchen sink either. I have even tried varnish remover. The substance has been sprayed on the drapes, upholstering, bed spreads, furniture, walls and woodwork. They also sprayed my new wall-to-wall carpeting and some carpeting existing on the floors. The pile is stuck together.

It seems that I have fallen into the hands of crooks. The contractor did not complete his contract, nor pay some of his workmen, so they have filed liens against my house. He brought the painters to the job and this work the contractor was supposed to have paid for as a part of the contract. It looks as though an owner has no rights, by law, at all, not even the right of police protection. I have retained an attorney who has filed suit against the contractor for default of contract. But that will take time and I need immediate assistance.

The second matter concerns both the Police Department and the Parks Department.

I live across the street from Chastain Memorial Park on Lake Forrest Drive, N.W. Before we purchased our lot, we were told by some members of Mr. Chastain's family that he had bequeathed the acreage on which the park is located to, I believe, Fulton County, as the property at that time was located outside the city limits, with the stipulation that a golf course be built on it and that the park be kept beautiful in order to be an asset to that section of the county. After this park was incorporated into the City of Atlanta, the commissioners began letting the park run down. It has been very shabbily kept and the commissioners have even tried to give a concession to a company to install amusement-type equipment in the park. The people in my section have been forced constantly, over the years, to fight this sort of thing, as all of us have quite a bit of money tied up in our property and the area is restricted. This undesirable use of the park would completely ruin a nice neighborhood, one that has always been quiet and beautiful, and it would at the same time greatly devalue our property.

Within the past five years or so the Parks Commissioner has done several things clandestinely, so that we did not learn about it in time to protest.

The first thing was the erection of poorly constructed shacks on the ball field at the corner of Wieuca and Lake Forrest Drive to house the Little League's ball equipment. They had already graded the land, installed storm sewers for drainage and erected tall bright lights so games could be played at night as well as during the day. They also installed loud speakers, which they turned up so high that the sound has just about shattered our ear drums. We cannot sit in our living rooms without closing the windows and drawing the blinds because of the noise and the blinding lights. We can't even hear our televisions. This field is used for both baseball and football, which means that this activity goes on most of the year.

We have just learned that the Parks Commission is getting ready to build a stadium on the park site just across from my home, south of the one on the corner of Wieuca and Lake Forrest Drive. Grading has already been done and probably the drainage system. This work has also been done clandestinely. The portion of the park nearer the street across from me is already being used for baseball and football practice. This we do not object to. It is the ball park and the inconsideration of the people using the facilities which is objectionable.

At the present time, the nice, considerate mammas and pappas of these practicing ball players come out in droves, park their cars on both sides of Lake Forrest Drive covering a two block area. The street is a two lane street only, and there is posted on the park side of the street signs denoting "No Parking at Any Time". In spite of this, these nice people ignore the parking rules, the rights of others and park anywhere they please. Consequently, the late afternoon, heavy traffic (and our street accommodates heavy traffic) has only one lane left on which to travel. This creates a traffic jam every afternoon, which lasts for almost two hours. Poor working people, like myself, after having worked all day, fought the heavy traffic through the city, arrive near home to find that they can't get through. So we sit and wait for the traffic to clear the one lane before we are able to drive into our own driveways. But, many times lately, even the privilege of driving into our driveways has been denied us, for junior's nice considerate parents are now parking across our driveways. This has happened time after time. I have called the police and so have my neighbors. They come out and politely request these people to move their cars. In the meantime, my car sits in the one lane, blocking traffic for blocks behind me until the officer can find the lawbreaker and get the car out of the way. He doesn't even give the person a ticket. Across the street in the "No Parking" zone sits a long row of cars, parked illegally. The officer does not even say a word to them, just ignores it. He gives me a line about trying to do something for the kids to cut down on delinquency. Right here, may I make a suggestion? Why doesn't someone do something about the delinquent parents? After all, junior's trouble boils down to

the fact that mamma and pappa either don't care or are too ignorant to do anything about controlling Junior. They have found an easy solution - just dump Junior into the hands of a coach and then that leaves them free to go on their merry way unhampered. So, these delinquent parents, because of their inability to shoulder their own responsibilities, are allowed to inconvenience and annoy law-abiding tax payers, even though these same parents are members of a minority group whose boys are interested in baseball or football. Do we have no rights at all?

The straw that broke the camels back occurred last Saturday morning, October 21st 1967. Around 8:00 A.M. I had occasion to leave my home on a very important errand. When I was ready to leave, I found my driveway blocked again. I called the police, waited 40 minutes but if they came, I did not see them. While I was looking for the police car, the car blocking my drive drove off. I gathered up my things to leave again and found that another car had just driven up and parked in my driveway, partially blocking it. Yes, I was furious! I again called the police and told them that if they didn't get out there in a hurry, I would take matters into my own hands. They came, but the officer began giving me more talk about entertaining the children. I demanded that he give the person blocking my driveway a ticket and remove the cars from across the street in the "No Parking" zone also. He called his Lieutenant. I waited. By this time I was an hour late. The Lieutenant finally came and I asked him to do the same thing. He told the officer to find the owners of the cars and ask them to repark their cars and to ask the owner of the car blocking me to move the car. This took time. No ticket was given anyone except one car whose owner did not seem to be present.

So what happened! The very considerate mammas and pappas were back Monday afternoon, all of them parked along the "No Parking" zone and in front of driveways again. They know, of course, that they will never get a ticket, but will just be asked oh, so politely, to move their cars. Is this the way the Police Department is supposed to fulfill their duties? Are we, the tax paying, law-abiding citizens supposed to be happy and endure this treatment?

I would like to ask and have answered two questions, Mr. Allen.  
No. 1: Who pays for all of this development of ball parks, grand stands, lighting systems, grading, drainage systems, loud speakers, etc.? It must take quite a slice of the tax payer's money to do this.

No. 2: How long does the City of Atlanta expect their burdened tax payers to stand for such treatment and at the same time be penalized by having their property, for which taxes are high, devaluated by such action on the part of the Parks Commission, as well as having their privacy invaded and being inconvenienced all of the time?

Mr. Mayor, I am not only asking, but I am demanding that my driveway be kept clear. If the police department cannot or will not do this, I am taking the right to clear it whenever I find it blocked. I know that blocking of an individual driveway is illegal and I defy anyone to deny me the privilege of right-of-way into my own property.

I apologize for the length of this letter, but it was necessary in order to give you a clear picture of the situation.

Respectfully Yours,

Mrs. Birdie N. Baldwin

Copy furnished:  
Governor Lester Maddox  
Chief of Police, Herbert Jenkins