

Charles -
Hope this helps -
JJK

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Dear Governor Bush-

Stick with me just a moment, please, while I put in a ringing endorsement for Charles Norman, No. 881834 at Lake City. He is an exceptional man, and he fully deserves your thoughtful consideration.


I struck up a correspondence with Charlie nine years ago, when I was riding fairly high as a nationally syndicated political columnist. He liked one of my columns on some forgotten issue. I answered his note. He wrote back. I wish I had saved every one of the two or three hundred letters since then, for they led to a friendship I never would have experienced otherwise. Not all of his letters had to do with prison. He became deeply involved in Christian fellowship. He honed his remarkable skills as a graphic artist. He wrote prize-winning plays for the prison magazine. He got well started on a novel of life in Tampa at the turn of the 20th century. This is a talented man. He has served 23 years—*23 years!*—in prison. I cannot think of a single good public purpose that would be served by keeping him there.

What has impressed me most about Charlie is his unflagging faith that he will eventually be set free. I am satisfied from a reading of the record that he is innocent—that he was convicted on the perjured evidence of vengeful men—but I leave that argument to others. It is character that counts. He has earned his freedom.

As a Washington correspondent I chiefly covered the Senate, but I had the pleasure of knowing your parents during their time in the White House. Some years ago I hitched a ride with them on Air Force One from Houston back to Washington. In casual conversation with your mother I mentioned that my granddaughter Alina wanted to attend Ashley Hall in Charleston. Your mother volunteered to write in her behalf, and her letter turned the trick. It was a favor to remember.

Charlie's case will soon be pending before the Parole Commission. I have written the commissioners. Now I appeal to you for clemency. He is no risk to society. He has been punished unjustly. Please, sir, turn him free.

Sincerely,



James J. Kilpatrick