

APPENDIX IV

LETTER FROM SISTER ALEXANDRA APOSTOLIDES ADDRESSED TO THE 21st DISTRICT AT ITS CONVENTION IN JULY

"July 4, 1953

"My dear Sister Canakes:

"It was so very wonderfully kind of you to invite me to be present at our 21st District convention, to be held July 23-26, inclusive, in Stockton, California. I feel this honor very deeply, I assure you, and do not possess the adequate language by which to make my appreciation plain enough to bespeak my feelings.

"Dear Catherine, I cannot be present at the district convention, much to my regret, because I have begun an intensive study of the history of this great country, with particular emphasis on the 'American Revolution and its causes.' In writing to you on the anniversary of the freedom of this land—July 4—I am overwhelmed with the profoundest gratitude to a great people, the American people of 1776, who proved beyond any doubt or quibbling or discussion the Greek spirit of the freedom of the individual's mind and heart, the individual's demand for the right to exercise and live the "four freedoms", all of which were first designated by the ancient Greeks, and only reiterated and insisted upon, and proclaimed for the first time in writing by the Americans of the Revolutionary period.

"In thinking upon the struggles for those four freedoms, but especially that of freedom of religion, I am overcome by the stupendous heritage, the willing gift that has been given to us, you and me, and all the Daughters of Penelope, ours to cherish, to live each day with a renewed Greek spirit manner of reverence, if only we insist upon so doing. What a gift! What a fragile yet powerfully strong gift! Merely to think about it is to worship its potentialities! And to think that we, the Daughters of Penelope, are privileged to participate in the bounties, the offerings, of such a gift! It is, really, very breathtaking, to say the least.

"Thinking upon, or about, the ideals of the American Revolution, and the Greek idea of freedom, I cannot but tell you, as well as every other Sister of mine, dear Catherine, that it was exactly for the purpose of keeping in mind the blessings of the Constitution of the United States, that we founded our Order.

Now you know why I insist, and shall so insist, as long as I live, upon the practice, not only the theory, of trying to live up to the first Amendment, Article I of the Constitution of the United States, "Freedom of Religion."

"And now you know, also, why my spirit rebelled and became furious at the injustice done our order by the committee which took it upon itself to include and to prescribe religious discrimination in our Order's eligibility to membership. And now you will know, too, why, as long as religious discrimination is so recorded in our Constitution (which you will not find in my original Constitution for the Daughters of Penelope), as long as the Daughters of Penelope continues to tolerate such a written discrimination, I, as the founder of an Order which bases its ideals on the Greek spirit, freedom of the human mind to develop its own particular potentialities without hindrance to every other human mind to do so, and on the basis of the American ideal of the four freedoms—freedom of religion, freedom of the press, freedom from fear and freedom from want—as long as the Order I had the honor to begin on these ideals inscribes on its statutes and permits to be printed in its Constitution such an evil as religious discrimination, I must, in all honesty to myself and to my formulation of philosophy based on the two aforementioned ideals, refrain from participating in the affairs of the Order I founded, except in the humble capacity of repeating and repeating my original purpose of founding the Order: namely, that of making our members interested in the ideals of our two countries—Hellas and the United States, and thus, of all freedom loving lands, so that we, as a large group of serious minded people may do our utmost toward world union of freedom aspiring individuals. To this, I shall adhere to the best of my ability. Were I to do otherwise, I would nullify and desecrate my original purpose of the Order of which I am happy to be a founder.

"This message I am sending you, please read to our coming national convention after my special message is read by the Grand President from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Will you do this for me, Catherine? I would consider it a lasting debt to your gracious consideration and cooperation.

"The question re: the sign of the cross in our rituals has come up. For the sake of all future explanation of this sign which has been misunderstood by our Order, let me make it plain once and for all time. When founding the Order and form-

ulating its rituals, I thought that, as long as our purpose is friendship forming, we should do our utmost to broadcast friendship to the four corners of the globe, and no sign could be more representative in ritual of this 'four corners of the globe' as the four points of a cross. Merely this and nothing more. It was never meant as a sign of religious restriction or limitation. Once this is understood, the tenets of our original Constitution will hold muster for all time.

"If our Order must demand restrictions to membership eligibility, then the only wise one seems to be to limit it to Ahepan relationship, but I hope that the membership may never be limited to any group. In breaking down, or doing away with the original Ahepa relationship rules, our Order did a wonderful thing. It proved its great wisdom in broadening its scope. For this, I feel grateful. Let membership, then, be bounded only by personal character qualifications and no other qualifications, and our Order cannot be wrong, or ever disgrace its country or itself—of this, I feel convinced.

"Catherine, if I appear to be too strict in my demands in this affair, let me be so. I insist in upholding the first amendment, Article I, of the United States Constitution, now and for all time, as long as we shall live. It is this offering, and only this offering, that I beg to extend to all Daughters of Penelope for all time. I can give no other offering than this.

"You say in your letter, 'I hope that I will have the courage to face the many tasks before me at this time.' I like that attitude, for as long as we all face each day with that spirit and that determination to be courageous enough, no matter how many obstacles be placed in our way to our living our ideals, we need fear little, lest the evening of this day steal upon us evilly, reminding us of our having misspent its gift of this day!

"Hoping, then, that you, on your attendance at our national convention, may do me this honor of presenting and reading this message to my Sisters, I beg to remain always,

"Loyally in Theta Pi,

"Alexandra Apostolides."