

Gareth O'Neal and Kelsey Anne Pierce (editors)

*"Do not let the red cross alarm you":
Wartime Letters from the Dr. Fairfax Proudfit Walkup Theatre Collection
(1942-1943)*

Shelfmark

California State University, Fullerton (CSUF).

University Archives and Special Collections.

SC 10.

Dr. Fairfax Proudfit Walkup Theatre Collection.

Correspondence.

Undated (1942-1943).

Six letters (numbered 1 to 6 below).

Introduction

The six letters edited below are part of the "Dr. Fairfax Proudfit Walkup Theatre Collection" that is held in CSUF's University Archives and Special Collections. Donated by Dr. Walkup in 1971, the collection contains teaching materials, manuscripts, costumes, and her prized collection of dolls, as well as correspondence from soldiers during World War II. Fairfax Proudfit Walkup, born in Tennessee in 1887, was an actress, designer, administrator, playwright, and professor. She served as Dean of Costuming at the Pasadena Playhouse, earned a Ph.D. from the University of Utah (1951), and later taught in CSUF's Theater Department. Dr. Walkup passed away in Anaheim, California, in 1976.

During her time at the Pasadena Playhouse, Fairfax Proudfit Walkup encountered many young people. Some of her students had no real homes of their own, so they spent many hours at the Playhouse or at her residence at 369 California Terrace in Pasadena, California. Some came to call her "mom." When World War II broke out, many of her students enlisted, and they kept in contact with their "mom" by sending her letters from all over the world. Fairfax Proudfit Walkup gave these young people emotional support during uncertain times. It is because of her care for these former students that we have these letters in our collection so lovingly preserved.

The six letters edited below follow "Wally," probably Lt. Richard Radle Wadleigh (see letter 6 below) whose connections to Hollywood and the theater community are well established.¹ According to these letters, "Wally" studied at

¹ *The Hood Panther* [Camp Hood, Texas] [volume 1, no. 8], March 18, 1943, 1: "Former Hood Man In Cast Of New Film: Lt. Richard R. Wadleigh of the 127th Bn. RTC' was at the Officers Club, skipping through a movie magazine. He noticed a preview writeup on a movie called "Forever and a Day" which is showing at the 162nd and 37th Theaters tonight and the 37th and 24th St. Theaters Saturday night. Therein lies a tale. Lt. Wadleigh, born in England, and Pfs. Wendell Hulett, from Pexton, Illinois, were buddies in civilian life. They met in Hollywood,

the U.S. Naval Training School in Los Angeles, California, and traveled within California and abroad. The final letter is from Fairfax Proudfit Walkup herself and written to E. P. Moore of the U.N.R.R.A. (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) to recommend Wadleigh for a position. Though undated, these letters were likely written between 1942 and 1943, or shortly thereafter, since there are references to a performance of "The Blackout of 1942" (which was staged in Hollywood in 1942; see letter 1 below); to the May 3, 1943, cover of *Life Magazine* (featuring Diana Dill, the soon-to-be Mrs. Kirk Douglas; see letter 5 below); to the "Zoot Suit Riots" (June 1943; see letter 5 below); and to the aforementioned U.N.R.R.A. (founded November 9, 1943; see letter 6 below).

The letters are in good condition, written in cursive on various types of stationery. Even though letters 1 to 5 are all signed "Wally," letter 1 is in a different hand (perhaps due to dictation). One letter is typewritten (letter 6). The transcriptions below preserve the spelling, punctuation and capitalization of the original letters. Page breaks are indicated by a forward slash (/).

Edition: Letter 1, "Wally" to Fairfax Proudfit Walkup, undated (1942-1943), [U.S. Naval Training School, Los Angeles, California]

Tuesday 2000 (8:00 P.M.)

Dear "Mom" -

Things are really begining [sic] to roll. Classes² from 0800 (8:00) to 7 P.M. each day except Wednesdays and Saturdays. Those two days are left or I should say evenings are free for what ever [sic] we desire. Sundays are free too. Scheduled to remain here for only thirty days but the amount we are expected to learn and must learn in this short span of time is much - very much. The fellows are really a nice groupe [sic] of men. Most of them are much senior to me in education especially along this line. It seems / most of them have been through law or some other highly specialized school. Time will tell how I come out. I hear we are to have a "blow out" someplace in Holly wood [sic] next Wednesday evening. This is to bring the higher ups closer to us and for both to get better acquainted [sic]. Of course now if I'm as sore then as I am now I see a poor evening ahead for me. Some of the boys have seen "Blackout of '42'"³ and highly recommend I see it. I am free each night at 7 and 5 on Wed[nesday]. + Sat[urday]. all day

roomed together, were in stage plays and about to break into the movies. Then Lt. Wadleigh went into the Air Corps, March Field, California, and on to the TD OCS in January. Hulett went into the cast of "Forever and a Day" - his first movie part. Soon afterwards he came into the service and was assigned to a TD outfit trained here, now stationed in Africa."

² The letterhead features a titled picture of the "U.S. Naval Training School, Los Angeles, California." This facility was built between 1938 and 1941 by the WPA (Works Progress Administration). Today, it is located on 1700 Stadium Way (near Dodger Stadium), Los Angeles, California 90012.

³ "Blackout of '42," presumably a play or revue. A theater party in conjunction with a Hollywood performance of "The Blackout of 1942" is mentioned in an article in the *San Bernardino Sun* [volume 49], September 26, 1942, 10.

Sunday. / You set the time and drop me a card or telephone call. Should you desire to come by any day I'm off at 5 or 7 you may let me know and I'll meet you at the Armory at 1353 Elysian.⁴ Hope to see you soon. I fear however, that most of my time will necessitate concentrated study. Thanks again for all you've done and I hope to see you soon.

Respectfully, Wally

Edition: Letter 2, "Wally" to Fairfax Proudfit Walkup, undated (1942-1943), [no place]

Tuesday P.M.

Dear "Mom,"

I know I should have called you! But I'll be darn if you find time to do all you want or even desire to do. It would only take a moment I know but it seems that every time I go down to call there is a line waiting to use the darn thing.⁵ So what do I do - write you. The dinner dance was a very nice affair. Met the Captain⁶ with the greatest of ease - true playhouse style! Barbara⁷ caused much discussion among the boys. All wanted to know where I found her, etc. Barbara and I danced so well together until the Captain completely turned in his chair to watch us. / Wish you could have seen us. I was dressed with Blue top coat + gloves and Barbara, Well! You know she can wear clothes. All in all we had a very lovely evening. I got in at 3:30 and had an early morning watch Friday. Boy! What a long day Friday and Saturday turned out to be. On my last week here. Having to put in the last minute "cram" too. Hope it proves to be worth the effort. With all that is going on around me I am beginning to feel somewhat more at ease among all this strange business. I hope to get out this weekend but don't know yet if I shall be able to or not. Look for me when you see me. Since we have examinations Saturday I'll be glad to get away. / [We] Were given three new books to read yesterday and have one more to get. They expect you to read and memorize all you read as fast as a plane can fly. These books being secret and confidential you can't take them from the study room and boy!! secrecy is blown in our faces every way you turn. God! What a Navy we have!! Hope you went to the beach as you'd planned. Did you? You should have you know. Keep your fingers crossed for me Friday and Saturday. I'll need it. Hope to see you soon.

As ever, Wally

P.S. Have gained a few more pounds. How I'm doing?!!

⁴ "1353 Elysian," a multi-unit residence at 1353 Elysian Park Drive, Los Angeles, California 90026 (near Dodger Stadium and, thus, near what would have been the "U.S. Naval Training School" in 1942), was built in 1922 and still standing at the time this edition was completed (2019).

⁵ Presumably a reference to a telephone.

⁶ Identity unknown.

⁷ Identity unknown.

Edition: Letter 3, "Wally" to Fairfax Proudfit Walkup, undated (1942-1943), [Hotel Lafayette, San Francisco, California]⁸

Wednesday

Dear "Mom,"

Thanks for the very nice letter. It just did reach me before checking out. Will go aboard today. Saw David Chin[n]⁹ last night. We went out to a few night spots. Have not seen or heard of Lib Lakin¹⁰ again. She was to call me but did not. I don't think you will need my number but anyway it' [s] 198405.

Bye, as ever, Wally

Edition: Letter 4, "Wally" to Fairfax Proudfit Walkup, undated (1942-1943), [Hotel Lafayette, San Francisco, California]¹¹

Friday

Dear "Mom,"

Had a nice trip up but wish I'd flown. You know, just for fun. Reported to my Commandant and must. Reported to my Commandant¹² and must report back Tuesday. Wish I knew when (appr[o]x[imately]) we were leaving. Gee! there are millions of sailors here it seems. Good ol' San Fran. Sorry for the weak good bye I gave you but / I found it hard to say good bye - really I did. Will you forgive me? Thanks , for every thing [sic]. Wish I were a master with words for then I might be able to tell you actually how I truly appreciated what you've done for me. Have no idea how long I'll be here so should you write I'll be here - at the Lafayette!! / Hope to see Dave Chin[n]. Will drop him a line since I do not have his phone #. It's hot as _ _ _ up here and I'm hungry as _ _ _ so I'll stop and get a stake [sic] before I fold up.

Love, Wally

P. S. Saw Lib Lakin for a moment. Same Lib!

⁸ The letterhead is that of the hotel: Hotel Lafayette, 240 Hyde Street, San Francisco, Calif., Phone: ORdway 4031, Walter Brown Mgr., Harvey Myhre Asst. Mgr. The hotel was built in 1928, was subsequently renamed "Midori Hotel" (also Conrad House), is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and is also listed as a "San Francisco Homeless Resource." It was still standing at the time this edition was completed (2019).

⁹ For David Chinn, see Alisa Morgan and Kate Tello, eds., "From the Stage of the Pasadena Playhouse to the Theaters of World War II: The Chinn Letters from the Dr. Fairfax Proudfit Walkup Theatre Collection (September 3, 1941, to June 6, 1946)," in this volume.

¹⁰ Identity unknown.

¹¹ The letterhead is that of the hotel; see letter 3 above.

¹² Identity unknown.

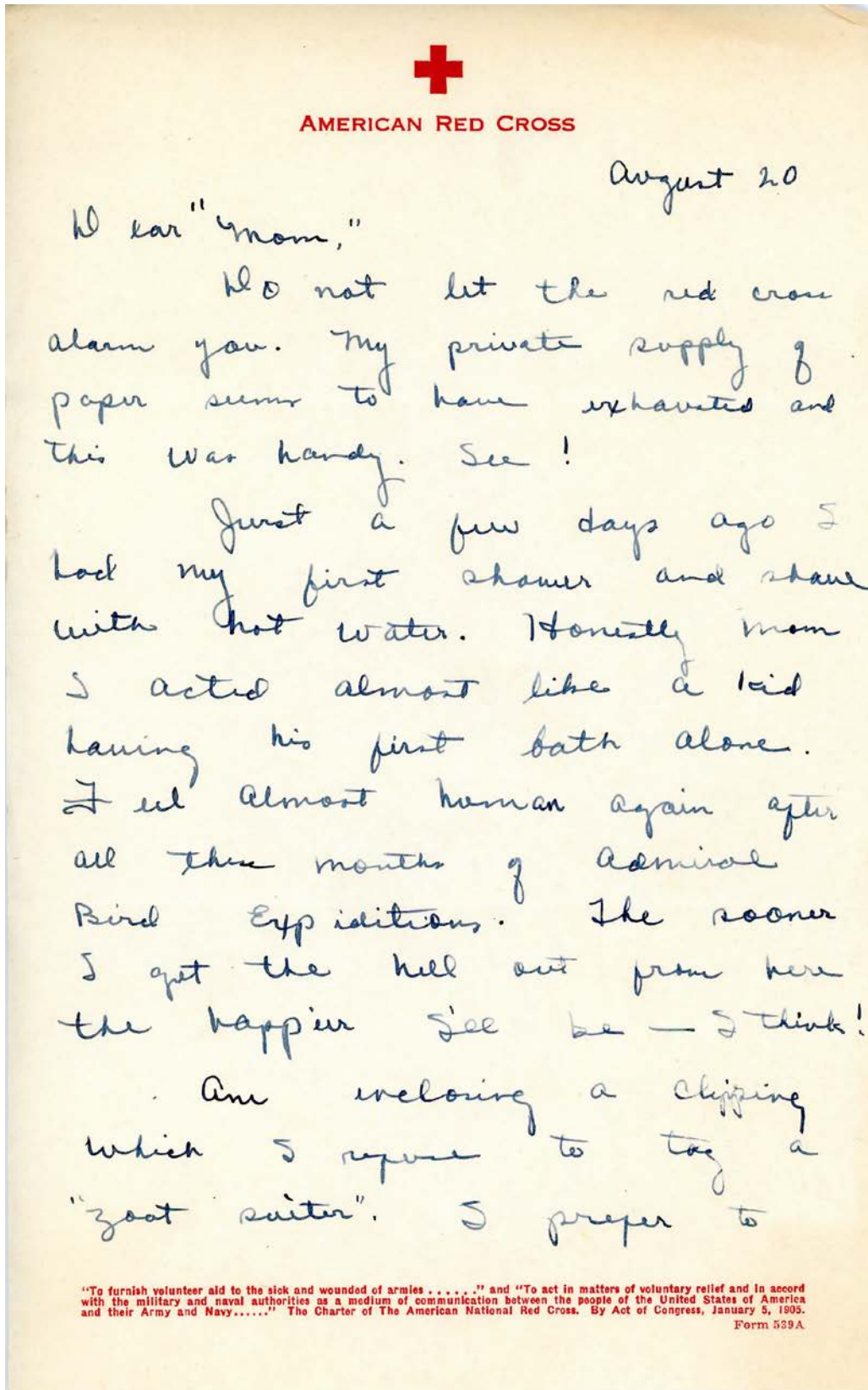


Figure (above): Letter 5, "Wally" to Fairfax Proudfit Walkup, undated (1942-1943), [no place; based on content, outside the U.S.], page 1.

Edition: Letter 5, "Wally" to Fairfax Proudfit Walkup, undated (1942-1943), [no place; based on content, outside the U.S.]

August 20

Dear "Mom,"

Do not let the red cross alarm you.¹³ My private supply of paper seems to have exhausted and this was handy. See! Just a few days ago I had my first shower and shave with hot water. Honestly mom I acted almost like a kid having his first bath alone. Feel almost human again after all these months of Admiral Bird¹⁴ Expeditions. The sooner I get the hell out from here the happier I'll be - I think! Am enclosing a clipping which I refuse to tag a "zoot suiter".¹⁵ I prefer to / think of him of as being a conglomeration of all the composit [sic] developments man has thought up since the beginning of time. You may have gazed at it before but I thought you might get a "little kick" from it since the excitement between the under and overpaid workers, or shall we say between the red blooded Americans and the "riff raff" - purely an opinion.¹⁶ Our lovely Diana Dill¹⁷ looked mighty sweet on the May 3rd issue of Life.¹⁸ The fashions may match spring but I have my doubts of our Miss Dill. / Mom did I send you a snapshot taken not so long ago of "me on lil' self"? [?] If not let me know and I'll drop you one in the next letter. With it you will notice a few changes in my appearance [sic]. Got looped a few nights past. The capacity is much lower here than in the U. S.¹⁹ One or two small ones and you are up in the clouds. Until we meet [sic] mom.

Always, Wally

¹³ The letterhead features the red cross and the name of the organization ("American Red Cross"); the footer contains the motto: "To furnish volunteer aid to the sick and wounded or armies" and "To act in matters of voluntary relief and in accord with the military and naval authorities as a medium of communication between the people of the United States of America and their Army and Navy....." The Charter of The American National Red Cross. By Act of Congress, January 5, 1905. Form 539A.

¹⁴ Presumably a reference to Richard E. Byrd (1888-1957), a U.S. Navy officer and explorer who was on active duty during World War II.

¹⁵ Zoot suit, a man's outfit popular with various U.S. ethnic communities during the 1940s.

¹⁶ Presumably a reference to the so-called "Zoot Suit Riots" in Los Angeles, California, in June 1943, when Mexican Americans clashed with members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

¹⁷ Diana Love Webster (1923-2015), née Dill, Bermudan actress, married to Kirk Douglas (1943-1950/1951).

¹⁸ *Life Magazine*, May 3, 1943, cover.

¹⁹ This suggests that he was not in the U.S. at the time.

Edition: Letter 6, Fairfax Proudfoot Walkup to E. P. Moore, undated (1942-1943), Pasadena, California [typed

FAIRFAX PROUDFOOT [sic] WALKUP
369 CALIFORNIA TERRACE²⁰
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA]

E. P. Moore,
Asst. Chief Personnel Investigation,
U N R R A,²¹ Washington, D.C.

Richard Radle Wadleigh well known to me about eight years. superior background, knowledge of languages acquired in long residence in Europe. Most intelligent, eager, and thoroughly reliable in all endeavors. Family background impeccable, integrity above question. Gets along with all types of people, physical stamina fine. As student had unusual scope of knowledge, historical and literary predominating. No reserves in rec[ommending] him for any responsible and position.

Fairfax Proudfoot Walkup

ABOUT THE EDITOR: *Gareth O'Neal of Anaheim, California, earned two B.A. degrees in French and Comparative Literature (2015), as well as an M.A. in English at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) (2018), where he is also a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society). His English M.A. thesis applied Albert Camus's absurdism to H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos. He is currently pursuing an M.A. in History at CSUF with a thesis/project on the brass rubbings in CSUF's Roberta "Bobbe" Browning Collection. He is a 2019 recipient of CSUF's Hansen Fellowship in Oral and Public History.*

ABOUT THE EDITOR: *Kelsey Anne Pierce of Carson City, Nevada, earned her B.A. in Theatre with an emphasis in Writing and Speech from the University of Nevada, Reno (2007). She is currently pursuing an M.A. in History at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), focusing on Medieval and Public History. She is a member of CSUF's Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society). The primary-source edition published above originated in the "History and Editing" course offered by CSUF's History Department.*

²⁰ The house at 369 California Terrace, Pasadena, California 91105, was built in 1924 and still standing at the time this edition was completed (2019).

²¹ U.N.R.R.A., United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (active 1943-1947).