May 6, 1930

Mr. William H. DuBarry,
Assistant to the Provost,
University of Pennsylvania

My dear Mr. DuBarry:

In accordance with your request of today, I am sending you this letter containing my version of the "riot" Wednesday, April 30, 1930.

About ten thirty that night, Mrs. Willis and I walked down to see the burning of the effigies in the vacant parking space on Locust street in the 3600 block. After the fire had died down, the crowd dispersed, the majority heading for the Dormitories through the Woodland Avenue gate to the parking space. On going down Woodland to the Dormitories, two trolleys were pulled from the trolley wire, but no ropes were cut or other damage done. We then walked out the Locust Street entrance to Thirty Seventh Street, and then down to Woodland opposite the Dormitories and stood in the entrance or in front of the windows of the Baylinson Store.

The sidewalk in front of the Dormitories was packed with students, the windows were lined with them and on each of the other corners of Thirty Seventh Street, students were standing in groups.

While standing in this fashion, they jeered and cheered at the street cars and automobiles that passed. When the traffic light went green for Thirty Seventh Street, probably a hundred leisurely crossed the street, still crossing after the light turned yellow for the next change. Motorists tried to crash through them before the light turned red. This appeared to be the total of the disturbance caused by the students. Up to this time I saw no particular disorder of a damaging or dangerous nature.

Suddenly a police motorcycle with a side car whirled recklessly up to the corner. It stopped for a minute on the Woodland Avenue side, the police were threatening from what we could see and from the demeanor of the crowd, they withdrew up West on Woodland Avenue in front of St. Bedes Chapel. A lot of jeers were emitted, but still no further disorder. With warning, a patrol wagon recklessly drove up to the corner, and police led my a man wearing glasses in a light topcoat, swinging a blackjack, landing in the midst of the crowd, striking this way and that, seizing any they could and with extreme roughness and brutality, throwing them into the patrol wagon. Vile names were used without reserve by the police. It was one of the most brutal, inexcusable, without warning attacks that I have ever seen made. This continued, the students then retaliating by throwing almost anything they could lay their hands on. I saw several students with cut and bumped heads, one doubled with agony due to a blow in the abdomen.

We then walked back towards my house here, up Thirty Seventh Street and Locust Street West. By this time patrols were tearing around corners unexpectedly, police following the same tactics as described above and students retaliating as best they could. As we were walking us Locust a motorcycle with a side car and two police and a trolley up the side walk going easily thirty miles an hour and I had to pull my wife to one side and to the curb to avoid being hit.

From the steps of our apartment group on Locust Street we watched the rest of the scene. Motorcycles running on the sidewalks, boys seized right and left whether they were in their own doorways, participants of not. Finally I saw them rush at the Kappa Nu house and forcibly enter it, bringing the boys out and placing them in the
Patrol wagons and haul them away regardless of attire. They rushed into the stores and arrested everyone in the store, regardless of the fact of participation. At this point the disturbance was virtually all above Thirty Seventh Street. I returned to my house and called my fraternity house, Phi Gamma Delta and urged them to throw nothing, keep the door open and unlocked, and not participate in the riot. As I returned I saw the police shoot the Kappa Sigma door in and enter that house again ruthlessly bringing out boys in any kind of garb and laying them in the patrol wagon. One burly policeman was manhandling a young boy scarcely five feet two, beating him over the head and calling him every name possible on the way to the patrol wagon.

From here on I watched them work on down Locust Street towards Thirty Sixth Street, breaking in the Delta Upsilon House, by using second story methods, then shooting the door and using an ax. Then to Phi Upsilon, then back to Phi Sigma Kappa, then across to Phi Gamma Delta. During the time that the police were in this section there was nothing thrown from the Phi Gamma Delta House at all. The door was unlocked. They entered, upset all the furniture in the front living room, throwing lamps to the floor, although there was not a soul in the room at the time. They then corralled all the students in the house taking them to the West Philadelphia Station house, after breaking into the Chapter Room. When the house had been emptied and they were still emptying the Phi Sigma Kappa House in a second raid there smashing their way through, for I could hear the breaking glass, there was a crash on Locust Street and they immediately broke in the Phi Gamma Delta House for the second time, this time deliberately breaking the leaded glass windows near the door, even though Ballard, a member there offered to let them in. In this search of the house they again broke into the chapter room, broke the rear door open and left the house vacant and unguarded.

I continued on down to the Station House in an endeavor to bail the members of my fraternity out and there found Dr. Shugart doing his best to handle the situation but I was refused admission to the station house. I was told to go in the back way and upon approaching the back way, I found I would have been held among the other prisoners. I returned to the front door and finally was able to gain admission to speak to Dr. Hart.

It was impossible to see anyone there, so I came back up with Dr. Hart to ask the police to withdraw from the scene and stop the trouble, for it would have continued all night and many of the boys were in a feverish state hunting for guns and other weapons. We were received in a very surly manner by Captains Grant and Duffy and Inspector Hearn. Dr. Hart told them that Director Schofield had suggested it and finally after much arguing Inspector Hearn listened to reason and dispersed the police.

We then returned to view the damage. Details of that will undoubtedly be placed in your hands by the respective houses. If not I shall be glad to aid in any way.

I would like to commend to your attention the article appearing in the Evening Ledger either Thursday or Friday afternoon by Dr. Marshall, 3804 Locust Street. It was the only true version of the affair that I saw in the papers.

Wilfred W. Wilcox, Med.'31 3617 Locust Street was also an eye witness with his wife to the disturbance in front of his home.

If we can be of any further assistance to you, please let me know.

Very truly yours,

Wilfred W. Wilcox, Med.'31 3617 Locust Street

Park Weed Willis, Jr.
College 1916, Medicine 1931.