

A Question and Answer Page for Foreign-Born

Questions on Americanization, Naturalization, Citizenship, Civil Rights and all matters of importance in regard to the necessary adjustments for foreign-born who have come here for the purpose of remaining permanently, will be answered promptly and as fully as possible, By Judge J. A. Buchanan, President Astoria Americanization Council in Astoria, and by H. J. Langoe, Editor The United American. Anyone asking a question may request that it be published under such pseudonym as he desires but the questioner must in all instances sign his correct name and address to the letter that accompanies the question. Anonymous questions will not be published or answered in this forum. People who are living in Astoria and vicinity may address their questions directly to Judge Buchanan.

Q.—I am going to apply for citizenship. I have a number of acquaintances who are citizens and have known me for more than five years, who, as neighbors, have seen and talked with me and been in my home regularly. I can get any two for witnesses, but most of them are not well known, though they are good people. One man whom I know is well known and has been a witness to many who have applied for citizenship and they have all gotten their papers, I believe, because they had this businessman for a witness. I have to pay him good for getting him, he says his pull ought to be worth something, but I don't know. If I could get my papers because I get him to come with me, it would be worth it, but do you think the others who have no pull, whom I don't have to pay for coming with me, would be as good?

—Tony D.

A.—I believe you are somewhat mistaken in the importance of what you call GOOD witnesses. Any two citizens of good reputation, though they be neither acquainted with the examiner nor the judge, will make as good witnesses for you as you will need, and either perhaps a better witness than the man "with a pull" of whom you are speaking. The man who frequently appears in court as a witness, regardless of his influence, will eventually be suspected of being a "professional" witness, that is, a man who will be a witness for anybody willing and foolish enough to pay the charges. The fact of the matter is that the citizen who is willing to go to court and say anything in your favor beyond what is actually the specific truth, if you pay him the price

he asks, is not a good citizen and what's more, he lends himself to a mighty mean business, that of perpetrating a fraud on Uncle Sam, perjuring himself, perhaps, and placing you in a mighty serious position, as suspected of buying witnesses to testify favorably so that you can get your papers. Should anyone learn about such a deal and report it, though it might not be a very serious offense in your case, yet it certainly would not help you any and might bring you before the court on a charge so serious that it might place you within the shadow of the federal prison. Take no chances with the "professional" witness. His "influence" is purely an imaginary one, and it is going to get him, and somebody else, into trouble some time. Get for your witnesses those close neighbors who can truthfully testify to your character, your moral and your home-standard, people who have seen and talked with you almost daily for the past five years. The chief character in a naturalization hearing is not your witness, it is yourself. If you have lived a clean good life and have nothing to hide and can show fair and general knowledge of American history and civil government and if you can create the honest impression that you are not seeking citizenship for mercenary reasons, beyond that of wanting to share in the privileges as well as the responsibilities which are due those who are homebuilders and co-builders in that America we prize in common, then you should have no trouble. A case in point is reported from a recent Naturalization hearing in Coos County, where the judge, or the examiner, seriously questioned one particular man for his frequent appearances in court as witness to citizenship applicants. There is little satisfaction for the man who "gets" by on the strength of a "well-known" witness with a "pull." It is rating citizenship very cheaply. If it is worth anything, it is worth fighting for it honestly and by one's own efforts. Go to school and study at home and prepare yourself with as much enthusiasm as the worthwhile college man who is working for his examination, and give less thought to the "influence" of your witnesses, then, any two reputable neighbors, as witnesses, will be all you need on the day of your hearing—H.J.L.

Q.—My parents, through adoption, were native born American citizens, when they, on a trip to Europe, "picked on" little me, at that time only two months old. My natural parents, with many children to care for, gladly gave me up, to relatives who were well situated and able to give me a better chance. The adoption proceedings were duly recorded over there and, as I understand it, over here after they arrived. I am told that

my adoption, in infancy, by American citizens who brought me into America when they returned after a sojourn abroad, made me an American citizen, that is correct, is it not?

—Ed. J.

A.—No. Your adoption did not change your nationality or any fact connected with your birth. You are foreign born and came into America much in the same way that immigrants do. If the circumstances of your adoption are not generally known and your conscience bothers you none, if, when the question of nationality arises, you answer evasively: "My parents were both native born Americans," it probably can't matter very much, if you are recorded as their child. However, if you want to be satisfied in your own mind and absolved from the allegiance that is technically binding you to the country of your birth, there is but one thing for you to do and that is to become naturalized according to the regulations governing the same.—H.J.L.

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