5. Sample Character Reference Letter: Defendant’s Wife

Date

The Honorable (name of your judge)

United States District Court Judge

(Name of your judicial district)

(Address of your judicial district)

City of your judicial district, state, zip

Regarding: U.S.—v—Your name and case number

Dear Judge (last name):

My name is [wife’s name] and XX is my beloved husband. We met seventeen years ago playing volleyball through a community college summer program. When the FBI arrested XX, I was shocked. XX is my best friend and the most wonderful father I could have wanted for my daughters. When I found out that he broke the law, I was disappointed and dismayed. I wish he had not used such poor judgment. Please accept this letter as my way to put XX’s mistakes in the broader context of our life together.

At volleyball practice, I first noticed XX’s confidence, outgoing spirit, and playful attitude. XX met my father on our first date and immediately demonstrated his gentleness and respect. We had a classic romance which included sports, beach volleyball, and sailing. I knew I wanted to spend the rest of my life with XX.

When a family member or friend needs help around the house, XX is the first call anyone makes. He is handy and willing to do anything he can to help anyone. XX is a CPA and has helped three friends make career transitions into the tax preparation field. I’m sure that if XX had been a park ranger, those same friends would be park rangers now. My husband is generous with his time and energy. He is a compassionate, good neighbor.

XX and I have two young daughters who are healthy and happy. XX always makes our family his first priority. Even during tax season, he does not miss our daughters’ volleyball practices or gymnastics meets. He is always home by five o’clock for dinner. Sometimes he will come home for dinner, stay until the girls go to bed, then return to the office to finish working.

From day one, my family loved and respected my husband. My father and brother often travel with XX for camping, backpacking, or an Alaskan fishing trip. My father is a travel nurse and often spends months at time living with us. Also, my mother lived with us for several months during her struggle with depression. I am so grateful for my husband’s kind, welcoming heart. Not every man embraces and adores his in-laws the way XX does.

I am very sorry that XX violated federal law. He has spoken at length with me about how and why he got involved in the bad decisions he made. I’m grateful that he accepts full responsibility and that he is committed to living the rest of his life as a law-abiding citizen. He made a serious mistake and he knows it. Our family is going through a process of self-examination and contrition together. I have forgiven my husband for making this mistake.

Every day, I enjoy the blessings of marriage to the love of my life. He is a loving father with a mature sense of duty. Already, he is showing everyone how to accept responsibility with humility and grace. When we tell this chapter in our family’s story, I know that story will end with atonement and reconciliation. I know XX will be an example of how to learn from mistakes and use life experience to be of service to others.

Your Honor, I hope you will keep my words in mind as you determine the sanction that XX must pay for his criminal behavior.

Sincerely,

[wife’s name]