

BACKGROUND ON WHY GORDON GREB IS BEING NOMINATED FOR THE EUGENE S. PULLIAM FIRST AMENDMENT AWARD

Near the end of World War II, when Staff Sergeant Gordon Greb¹ was editor of the camp newspaper at Fort Dix, N.J., he discovered movies were being censored and several years later decided to use his GI Bill to find out why the courts did not find this an abridgment of the First Amendment. Researching the problem for his master's degree at the University of Minnesota, he was astonished to find that eight states and more than 90 cities had censorship boards. That's why Greb offered to help New York attorney Ephraim S. London when his movie censorship case had been accepted on appeal by the U.S. Supreme Court. What Greb sent was his carefully researched University of Minnesota master's thesis, "Freedom of the Movies in Presenting News and Opinions (1951), which argued that movies deserved protection from censorship under the First Amendment since movie censorship also threatened newspapers, television, radio, and all other new forms of communication.

Not only had Greb built a strong case for film freedom arising from law and theory but he had also gathered affidavits of support from major Hollywood writers, producers and directors, including Screen Actors Guild President Ronald Reagan, all of whom agreed that movies should have the same freedom and responsibility as newspapers. When London was questioned about opinions of the motion picture industry in the oral argument, London was able to point to what Greb had found in his survey of screenwriters, directors, producers, and studio heads.

In what had been a losing case in New York, attorney London achieved an amazing turnaround by convincing the high court in 1952 to strike down film censorship in *Burstyn v. Wilson, et al.* In thanking Greb afterward for his help in this precedent-setting case, attorney London wrote, "You certainly do have my enthusiastic consent to the inclusion of comment in your article to the effect that your thesis was of considerable help and assistance," adding, "I am amazed that someone who is not a lawyer could have had so clear a comprehension of the legal questions involved."

¹DOCUMENTATION FOR EVERYTHING ABOVE: <http://grebrief.blogspot.com>