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54/07/09 Letters to Slain Wife Studied for Death Clew

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Letters to Slain Wife Studied for Death Clew

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New Rocky River Bridge
Approved by voters
Nov. 4, 1951

Notes From Friends, Relatives Examined in Murder Probe

By JIM VAIL

Personal letters of Mrs. Marilyn Reese Sheppard were read by the authorities today in a hunt for leads that might help solve her brutal July 4 murder.

Some of the letters, written to the pretty 30-year-old clubwoman by relatives and friends, included advice to preserve "the family unit."

But relatives of her handsome husband and high school sweetheart, Dr. Samuel Sheppard, insisted that the couple had no special marital problems, and were "deeply in love with each other."

The letters were found in the Sheppard home at 28924 Lake Rd., Bay Village.

The key letters under investigation were written to Mrs. Sheppard while she and her husband were living in Los Angeles, where Dr. Sheppard studied osteopathy. This was before they moved to Bay Village—he to join the staff of his family's Bay View Hospital, she to become a popular housewife active in church and community affairs.

"This isn't just something that affects you and Sam," a letter from a close relative advised, "because you both have a responsibility in Chip. . . . (Chip is the couple's six-year-old son, Sam Jr.)."

Cite Responsibility

"After all, when we have children, the family unit must be preserved. Thoughts of ourselves alone, when we want and accept this responsibility . . ."

The letter went on to say that "Sam is too fine a man with a good brain, which certainly will make him realize how foolish his actions were. Sam has the beginning of a wonderful life with you and Chip. He also has the ability of an outstanding doctor. His profession, a wonderful wife, and a fine son will help, we pray, to make him see how foolish anything he could do . . ."

A "tremendous change in your personality, Marilyn," had

been noted by the writer, "and I think you have grown immeasurably as a result of all this. . . . Frankly, where you previously were a very reticent and inhibited person, you seem to enter into activities . . . maybe you really felt part of our family group. . . ."

"If You Need Help"

Another letter, written by a woman relative, told Marilyn: "Something I had to learn is that men are little boys who hate to grow up."

"Seems like the end of the world," it said. "Our faith in a power greater than ourselves and understanding of the frailties of human beings to withstand temptation at times and the will to preserve the family unit do help give us the necessary strength."

"Hold onto yourself, Marilyn, and try in every possible way to remain the ideal wife. . . ."

"If at any time you need help, don't hesitate to call us and reverse the charges. . . ."

Study of the intimate letters was part of an effort by Assistant County Prosecutor John J. Mahon to reconstruct the life of the victim and help solve one of the most violent murders in county history.

He interviewed Mrs. Thomas S. Reese, Mrs. Sheppard's stepmother, and Bay Village Mayor J. Spencer Houk, a friend of the family, yesterday.

Mahon said "many other people"—relatives, friends and acquaintances of the slain woman—also would be questioned.