54/08/20 Sent Sheppard's Extortion Notes, Lett Confesses

Cleveland Plain Dealer

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Man Captured in Attempt on Kay Halle Says He Mailed Two Letters to Dr. Richard, Two to Another Bay Resident

Five extortion notes, one to Miss Kay M. Halle, two to a brother of Dr. Samuel H. Sheppard and two to a Bay Village butter and egg man, were mailed to the intended victims by James Howard Lett, Cleveland Heights police reported last night.

Detective Capt. Charles Ruff of the Heights suburb said Lett's admissions relating to the Sheppards were substantiated by Dr. Richard N. Sheppard, eldest brother of the Bay Village murder suspect.

Dr. Sheppard recalled receiving two letters in the first week of August in which requests were made for sums totaling $25,000, Capt. Ruff said.

The letters "requested" a $10,000 advance. Instructions were to have been sent later detailing how the money was to be paid over.

After the $10,000 was paid, the letter writer said, he would come forward and make his identity known, at which time he would accept $15,000 more and responsibility for the death of Marilyn Reese Sheppard.

Dr. Richard told Capt. Ruff he could not recall whether he had destroyed the letters or turned them over to Attorney William J. Corrigan.

Mrs. Dorothy Sheppard, the doctor's wife, observed that Lett's photograph bore a likeness to a suspect sketched from a description of a man walking through the area of the murder given by a Sheffield Lake couple.

Capt. Ruff said Lett also told of addressing two demands for $10,000 to Harry H. Schuster, operator of a butter and egg stand at the West Side Market.

Schuster never received the letters. Lett addressed the threats, similar to those received by Miss Halle, to 11000 Earle Avenue N.E., the former home of Harry Schuster, a displaced person recently arrived here from the old country.

Ruff ascertained the threats had been intended for the butter and egg man when Lett related that he knew Schuster to be operator of the stand at the market and had often made purchases there. Schuster lives at 356 Pinewood Drive, Bay Village, a street diagonally across from the home of Dr. Samuel H. Sheppard.

Instead, the threat was received by the Schuster formerly of Earle Avenue. The letter was forwarded to him by the post office to his new address, 11402 Templett Avenue N.E.

(Continued on Page 8, Column 3)
I short, heavy-set man who walks and a limp. His extortion story.

Lett was "just talking." Detective George Vance, commented: "Either Lett's cuckoo or I am." When you have done this then put ad in personal column of Cleveland Plain Dealer.

The money will be as follows:

$5,000 in cash and put in either case that an advertisement be placed in the Plain Dealer:

$1,000 to be left in $4,000 in twenties, 1,000 in tens and the rest in five and ten-dollar bills. You will obtain your money in cash and put in leather case leather case to know and will get in touch with us.

What happened to the second letter to the Schusters police have not yet discovered. It was possible, investigators said, that Lett was "just talking."

Lett's questioners were unable to gain an admission from him that he alone was involved in the extortion plots.

Ruff said Lett stated he had two companions in the crime, a tall, heavy, swarthy man and a short, heavy-set man who walked and a limp. His extortion notes said there were four in the group.

Police pointed out to him that if he had confederates and they carried through their threats to kill, bomb, shoot and burn Lett would be as much to blame as they. He refused to change his story.

"I don't believe him," Ruff said. "He's a crackpot."

"WE HAVE PLENTY OF BOMBS!" was one of the threats contained in the letter received by Miss Halle. Reading the extortionist's message are Cleveland Heights Detective Capt. Charles L. Ruff (left) and Roger Williams, chief of Halle Bros. Co. store detectives.

In what we sue to get this pay off, you will be watched day and night wherever you go. If you make and if you double cross us we will know of it. Before that you leave we have other action and we go to work to prove what we say is true."

This note and all other written material is to be returned with money. When you have money for pay off you will take it to 26th Harcourt Drive and you will remain at home at all times until contacted, and tell no one of this note including family or friends or authorities to do so. We then ask us to show you we mean business.

"I don't believe him," Ruff said. "He's a crackpot."

Long-Winded Extortion Note, four pages in length, is partly reproduced here.

COMPARING NOTES are both allies Kay Halle (right) and Miss Ann Richards, wearing the mond wig she used to help trap extortionist. Miss Richards is a Halle store detective.

"HE'S A CRACKPOT!" was one of the threats contained in the letter received by Miss Halle. Reading the extortionist's message are Cleveland Heights Detective Capt. Charles L. Ruff (left) and Roger Williams, chief of Halle Bros. Co. store detectives.