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## 54/08/20 Sent Sheppards Extortion Notes, Lett Confesses

Cleveland Plain Dealer

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## SENT SHEPPARDS EXTORTION NOTES, LETT CONFESSES

### 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.

#### Sees Likeness

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.

#### Never Got Them

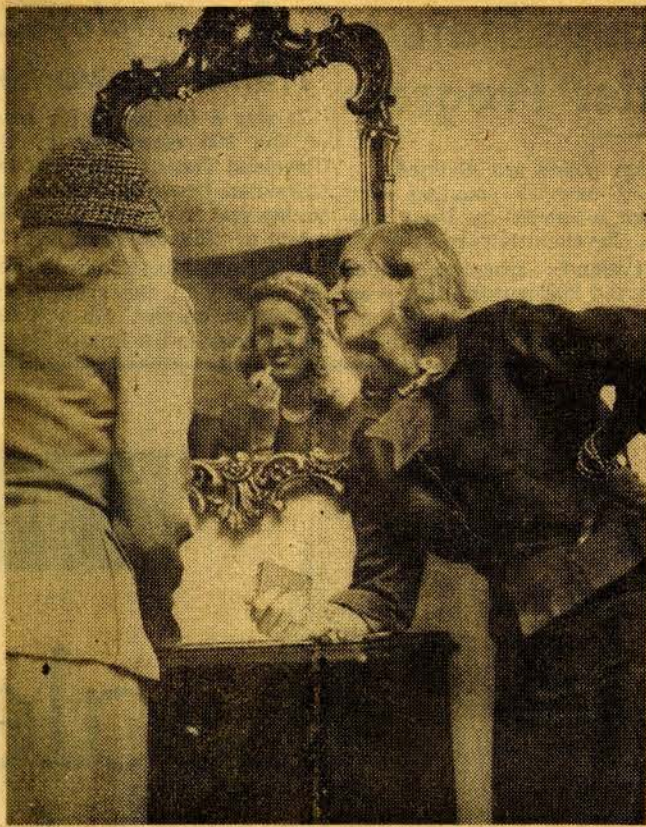
Schuster never received the letters. Lett addressed the threats, similar to those received by Miss Halle, to 11000 Earle Avenue N. E., the former home of Harry Schuster, a displaced person recently arrived here from the old country.

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 Temblett Avenue N. E.

(Continued on Page 8, Column 2)

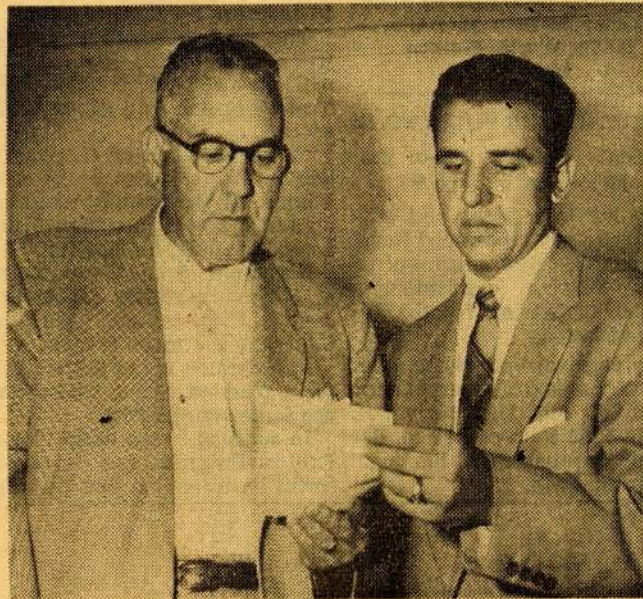




COMPARING NOTES are look alike Kay Halle (right) and Miss Ann Richards, wearing the blond wig she used to help trap extortionist. Miss Richards is a Halle store detective.

KATHERN. M. I  
 IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE AS WELL AS THOSE AROUND YOU HOUSE, CAR. E.T.C YOU WILL COOPERATE WITH US AN DO AS WE REQUIRE IN THIS NOTE. YOU WILL OBTAIN \$20,000 IN CASH AND PUT IN LEATHER CASE LEATHER CASE TO BE NO LARGER THAN IS NECESSARY AN KEEP AT HOME UNTIL CONTACTED. THE MONEY WILL BE AS FOLLOWS 5000 IN FIFTIES 5000 IN TWENTIES

LONG-WINDED EXTORTION NOTE, four pages in length, is partly reproduced here.



"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.

## Tried to Extort Sheppard Money, Lett Tells Police

(Continued From First Page)

Schuster, employed by a building company, said that the letter had been opened by his wife Monday and that he had not seen it since he was at work at the time.

Translating remarks of his wife, Schuster said the letter had demanded \$10,000 and threatened him with a bombing, among other things. There was also a paragraph requesting that an advertisement be placed in the Plain Dealer.

"I'm scared; I want no trouble," Schuster said. "That man has friends. We have no friends. They all died in the old country. That's all I know. I haven't got \$10,000. I've got nothing."

Cleveland detectives said the Schuster threat note was turned over to them two hours after it was received by Mrs. Schuster Monday morning.

### Similar Threats

It contained threats similar to those made to Miss Halle and asked that the following ad be placed in the Plain Dealer:

Babe—See me at once, Urgent.—Harry. The money was to be broken down in \$4,000 in twenties, 1,000 in tens and the rest in five and ten-dollar bills.

Cleveland police contemplated running the ad, but decided instead to turn the information over to the FBI.

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

### Ruff's Comment

Capt. Ruff, aided in his questioning of Lett by Detective Sergt. Charles W. Bythway and Detective George Vance, commented: "Either Lett's cuckoo or I am."

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

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

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." A lie detector test Ruff plans

to schedule for Lett and his woman companion today at Central Police Station may shed light on whether Lett conducted his extortion operations alone.

FBI agents visited Cleveland Heights to examine the four-page threat letter received by Miss Halle.

Ruff said he had not yet consulted the Heights prosecutor to determine whether Lett should be charged with extortion in the suburb or turned over to federal men for prosecution under statutes governing use of the mails.

### Text of Letter

Lett, a 37-year-old machinist captured Wednesday night in a trap set by Heights police, Miss Nina Nelson, secretary to Heights City Manager Ray Martin, and Miss Ann Richards, 20-year-old Halle Bros. Co. house detective, admitted writing the following letter to Miss Halle, Ruff said:

Kathern M.  
 If you value your LIFE as well as those around you house, car, e.t.c. you will cooperate with us and do as we require in this note. You will obtain \$20,000 in cash and put in leather case leather case to be no larger than is necessary an keep at home until contacted.

The money will be as follows 5000 in fifties 5000 in twenties 10000 in ten and fives. You will in no way mark money or record serial numbers or photostat it as we will know of this or if any one of us are caught spending it your life will be in danger. There are four of us an we will never be together so it will be impossible for police to catch all of us, before one of us get to you.

To give you an idea as to how we work and that we mean business (turn over) we have all for a number of years worked for the city an in such position to know if you inform the police, detectives— or state police or FBI.

We have at our disposal 1 plane and 4 car which we consider the fastest in the city with two way police radio hook up. We have plenty of small bombs with six large bombs due in next week from Detroit. We have plenty of small fire arms and ammunition.

We have long range field glasses We have two gasoline spray guns which could spray inside and outside of any normal size house in five minutes and then the touch of a match up she goes. We can rig up appliance to work for a minute an boom up she goes. Such as cars, radio—television etc.

We can enter any place even hooked up with alarm systems easy an unnoticed as we have done this before an many ways of doing things that still baffle the police to say the least

We mean business  
 If you cooperate with us no one will get hurt and we promise you that you will not here from us again

We know the penalty if we are caught so we naturally dont care

In what we use to get this pay off. You will be watched day and night every where you go an all phone calls you make will be recoreded.

We will know of any contacts you make and if you double cross us we will know of it within the hour. Then you leave us no other action and we go to work, to prove what we say (over)

This note and all other written material to be returned with money When you have money for pay off you will take it to 2163 Harcourt Drive and you will remain at home until contacted.

When you have done this then put ad in personal column of Cleveland Plain Dealer as follows

John  
 Baby is very sick, Come home, All is forgiven.

Kay-M.  
 When we see this ad we will know an will get in touch with you.

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 only asks us to show you we mean business.