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February 21, 1954

Dear Grote --

Schuy has been wanting to write you for several weeks, and since he is now over at the plant (despite the fact that this is a sunny Sunday afternoon), I will start the letter for him and maybe he can get it finished this evening. We are very pleased to learn that your Australian trip is shaping up. This sounds to us like a stimulating experience for you and one which you should not pass up. I hope you will send us an address through which we can contact you down there in case of any emergency; after you are settled (?) you can send us another address, to you direct.

All the clan are in good shape here and reveling in the spring-like weather. It's been fabulous for February -- a few weeks ago we hit 69 degrees, and most of the time it's been in the forties or fifties. A far cry from past winters I can recall. Everyone has an early case of spring fever.

During the past month we have spent many hours pondering over a problem of immediate concern to us -- the housing situation. Day by day we get more and more frustrated over the lack of space in our house and have really conducted a thorough investigation of the possibilities open to us. Things appear to be shaping up and we want to let you know how we're thinking.

You may recall our discussion about the Jones house, across the park from us on Union. We have sent out several feelers in that direction, and apparently Mr. Jones is not yet ready to sell. His wife is ill and does not want to move, and though Mr. Jones really would like to be picked up bodily and transported to sunny climes, he apparently is not ready to make the decision. (The mild winter has not been on our side in that respect; we didn't freeze him out or snow him under!) Anyway, further investigation reports that his price, when and if he wishes to unload, is in the neighborhood of \$35,000 -- which may be a jolt to you but is not so much of a jolt to us. I recall your estimating that \$20,000 would be a nice price for his home, and we told you then that we were positive that it would not be that low. For \$20,000 one can only hope to buy a rattletrap which requires many thousands of dollars for remodeling and renovating. His home is sturdy and well cared for and large; he may not get \$35,000 for it, but he will

probably get around \$30,000. Anyway, that price is far above us!

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We've talked to several people about this location of ours. Karl Rathje, who is in the business of handling commercial properties, estimated that our vacant land here might bring \$18,000, depending on when we sell and who we find to buy it. (These figures he gave us last fall). An appraisal we had made indicated that we might ask \$20,000 for the house and lot together. Soooooo, in all our figures, estimating as to what we can afford to buy, we have been using the figure of \$20,000, a little more or a little less.

We have sought advice from real estate people (several of whom look on this house as residential and cannot seem to get themselves into the frame of mind of looking at it as commercial property), and also have sought legal advice from Al Woodward, of Woodward and Rathje. (Bert Rathje is now Probate Judge and therefore is not as active in the business as he used to be). Al Woodward is very aggressive and well respected.

We went to see Al primarily to discuss our getting hold of the lot which lies across the park on Union, between the Jones house and the Barton house. This lot is owned by a real "character" who purchased it with the idea of moving an old church on to the site, converting the church to a religious recording studio, and going into business. He did not reckon with the zoning problem and met with an outcry of opposition. Result, he has owned the property for two or three years, and has since left town. We want Al to contact the owner for us and find out his price. The reason for this is the thought that we might be able to find a buyer for this vacant land, and move the house off and add to it to make adequate living space for us.

We have had an estimate from a house mover -- we have also designed an addition to the house and have received bids on the cost of building the addition -- it all appears to look like a good deal, for the prices we have had quoted to us seem reasonable and within our means. We also wanted the advice of Al Woodward, as an aggressive attorney who knows what's going on in town. We got an earful from him.

His first opinion was that once we let it be known that we are moving the house off this site and putting the land on the market, we would have buyers coming to our door. The commercial property in Wheaton is at a premium, as

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we are aware. Al told us about several outfits in town who are looking for space to expand or to use as parking area. The off-the-street parking is a real problem, and every vacant foot has been rented out at a handsome price. If we are interested in speculating in Wheaton any further, that's a possibility to consider. Schuy and I are not interested in such speculation; are you? If so, by moving the house off this site, this spot could be turned into parking area and possibly rent to \$200 or more a month. Are you at all interested in such an investment? When you were here at Christmas you indicated that you were ready to pull out whenever we were, but I mention this as an income possibility so that you will know it exists. \$200 a month is not a bad little income for merely parking cars on ones property. (That figure is based on the average charge of \$20 a month per car which is apparently being charged elsewhere in town). (Maybe we should consider renting out the driveway and the front yard even now -- Schuy gets our car out of the garage before nine every morning, and in my spare time I could become a parking lot attendant - jockeying cars around as tenants come and go.....hmmmmmmmm. I'll consider it. Ho. Ho!) (On the side, we could train the kids to wash cars for an extra fee!)

To get serious again (thanks a lot, but no thanks to that parking-washing deal above), as a result of learning about specific outfits who are looking for vacant property, we have revised our estimate of the situation. It may well be that we could get closer to \$24 or \$25,000 for this vacant piece. Does that surprise you? Add to that the fact that we understand one of our immediate neighbors is anxious to add to its holdings -- the Wheaton Federal Savings and Loan building which is directly behind us on Wesley street. We also have in mind to contact the telephone company and sound them out. (Their parking facilities even now are extremely jammed. Whenever a large truck comes into their parking lot to make a delivery, there is much jockeying of cars and to-ing and fro-ing in an attempt to get through). With an eye to the future, they may well be interested in buying this up to use as parking area now and to have as a safe-guard for the future. We have made up a list of some five or six possible customers whom we can approach, and Al Woodward agrees that we are in a spot where we

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will not require the aid of a real estate broker in selling this property.

On the other side of the fence, we were called this week by a real estate broker who reportedly has a professional man looking for income property. He is supposed to be a doctor, who wants office space and living space. We are going to follow through on this and see if such a person would be willing to pay the price. If the vacant land is worth a given figure (and remember the figures I'm batting about are only estimates at this point, but we intend to play one prospect against another and wring it as dry as we can, for your benefit and for ours), then anyone who wants to buy the house and land will have to pay a considerably higher figure. It would be folly to sell the house and land for only a pittance more than the land would bring, as far as we are concerned, for in effect the buyer would be getting a house for practically nothing. I trust you follow my reasoning.

At the moment, we are not making public the fact that we are considering any move at all. We played "hard-to-get" when the broker called to tell us about their prospective doctor, and agreed to discuss it and let them know if we are interested. Ho. Ho. Anyway, here's the way it schedules out:

1. We are now attempting to get an option on the lot across the park.
2. When we get the option sewed up, we can then proceed to the city fathers for permission to move the house to that location.
3. If we cannot move the house to that location, we must find another location to which to move the house.
4. Once we have an option, we can proceed in getting bids on this land at 21%.
5. Before we do anything, we shall also get bids on house and land as a package, to determine whether or not the real value here is in the land or in the structure.

If it should develop that we can realize more money, and considerably more money, by selling this as house and land, then certainly that is what we should do. But the opinions of people who are in the know locally on what the demands are for commercial property, seem to be that anyone who buys

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this would prefer to buy it without the house, and would pay as much for the land as would someone else pay for the house and land together.

In recent months there have been several transactions made in town for the purchase of property which had existing houses on it. The houses were not wanted and were sold to Mr. Muelfeldt for a few hundred dollars.

In one case, the Hull house over where the new junior high is being erected, Mr. Muelfeldt got the house for free, simply because he was willing to remove it. Otherwise it would have been torn down. I don't know how you feel, Grote, but I' would refuse to stand by and see this house torn down or given away to Mr. Muelfeldt or anyone else, no matter how much we were paid for the land. If it comes to that, Schuy and I would buy a lot any place in town and have the house moved there, live in it, and then re-sell it. We wouldn't ask you to put any of your money into such a venture, but we would take a chance and do that before we'd let any buyer tear this house down.

Having looked around at many houses in town since last fall, we are of the opinion that for our purposes, moving this house across the park would be satisfactory. We would add a wing to it (by turning the house around sideways on the lot) and have enough space for our needs; it would have a new basement, with attendant advantages; a new heating system; the location would not be in the most choice residential area but it would be convenient for schools and shopping, and we think it would be an adequate solution to our housing problem for many years to come.

Knowing all that, and assuming that this land can be sold for something like \$22 or \$24 or \$25,000, what is your attitude?

We shall certainly keep you informed of any real offers which are made to us and will, of course, make no decisions without first consulting you. The interesting thing about all this is that we have made no overtures to anyone, and yet we have been approached by two separate parties just asking if we have considered selling. Schuy and I have thought of it many times in the past several years, as you know, but felt that the longer we could stick it out here the better off we would be. We are fast reaching the point where it is desirable for us to live elsewhere, and apparently by

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remaining here the value of this land has increased to our advantage, and similarly, to yours.

If we are to attempt a house-moving project, it should be done this summer. I do not relish the thought of the resulting confusion of having a house up on stilts with four children underfoot getting themselves cemented into the foundation, but we both think it would be worth the unusual trouble. And having watched other houses moving down the street I have some idea of what is involved. In our case, if we move this house across the park, we would then have a few months ahead of us of building the addition, which should brighten the summer for the little ones. Oy!

It looks as though all the details are jelling here, or at least it looks as though they may jell, so we want you to be up to date. We also want very much to know how you feel about what we have outlined. (My "outlines" usually develop into "memoir" length books, just as this one did).

Let us know before you shove off for "down under" just what you think of all this.

To change the subject, you may be interested in knowing that my brother Larry, and wife Winnie, are now parents. They adopted a five months' old little boy a week ago, and are beside themselves with excitement. They telephoned us the night before they brought their "son" home and talked for almost an hour; we are delighted over the news.

Another cheering note concerns Verti-Blinds. Schuy has spent the past two weeks interviewing prospective salesmen in Chicago, and as of a week ago we hired one. He survived all sorts of investigations and aptitude tests and appears to be capable and enthused. Schuy has been working with him all last week and will continue to do so for another week or so, and then Schuy will be relieved of that responsibility. This is what we have needed for all too long and we are both very heartened. Add to this the fact that Schuy fired his rather inadequate secretary a month ago and hired a very bright and capable gal in her place. This has resulted in more efficiency already. Then on top of that, the gal who used to be Mike's secretary and right arm had left in the fall to go to California with her

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husband on a business venture. She had been really pepped up about working for us and did not want to leave. So, apparently things did not work out for them in California and they returned to this area. Two weeks ago she called up and asked Mike if he could find a spot for her back in our organization. Mike almost fell upon her but restrained himself. So at last we appear to be building up a staff of competent people. With two capable gals in the office, both Mike and Schuy are relieved of many of the details which formerly concerned them. And now with a salesman about to get working on Chicago, we begin to see the light ahead. All we need is a staff of good people to do the work which has been done by Mike and Schuy -- their four hands and two brains are just not enough and they knew it but had to proceed with caution. It looks as tho' this may be a good year for Verti-Blind, with the added help of these new people.

I'm about to get the little guys up from their naps, and I'll leave this letter here for Schuy to add to. Hope your eyes have held up under the strain! Remember that super electric mixer we got for Christmas? Too bad you aren't around now. I've mastered it and have developed some nifty recipes, one of which is a yummy, frothy frosting which covers a light, fluffy cake with about an inch of frosting all the way round! We should all put on weight! The mixer is a great boon to a family this size, believe me. I don't know how we got along without it. The kids enjoy a lot of the things which were just too difficult to whip up by hand. The angel food cake over which I used to work myself into a lather for forty minutes of beating by hand is now whipped up in three minutes on the mixer! Maybe I DO have time to take on that parking attendants job after all. What will you bid if I out you in?

Best of luck on your Australian venture.....Jean

Hi, Old Shee --

There are a few small matters which have come in the mail that you will be interested in learning about. The IRE National convention registration card has been received for the convention March 22 to 25.

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This I have thrown out. Enclosed is a listing for the IRE directory, which you will undoubtedly want to complete and return. Also, enclosed is a bill from the Gary-Wheaton bank for your safe-deposit box, which I have not paid. It occurs to me that if there will be any more small bills of this nature it will be ridiculous to send them back and forth across the Pacific; and to this end, you might well wish to establish a petty cash fund by writing me a check which I can deposit in your name in the Gary-Wheaton bank and draw against for payment of these items. You undoubtedly have some idea of the amount, so you do as you see fit. Also, for your information, I am enclosing the annual statement of the Gary-Wheaton Bank and its competitor. It appears the competitor is more aggressive than the Gary-Wheaton. You will undoubtedly get a laugh out of the eulogy to the Gary-Wheaton Bank by Frank Merrick which was inspired by his attendance at the last meeting. We sent this to us via the mail.

With regard to the shipment of the recorder presently in the garage, I have the following comment. We have found in shipping to Alaska and to the Hawaiian Islands, freight is much preferable to express. Upon your arrival in Sydney I suggest you find out the best water carrier, including its usual port of call on the west coast, and send this information to us along with the consignment address (some building, no doubt, at your base of operations in Sydney). We can then give Hahn the export license, if necessary, call him to crate it, make out a waybill with complete transportation instructions to the west coast, connecting with the water-carrier, for delivery to you in Sydney and send you the original copy of this waybill. This, I think, answers the questions you raise and you will know all the way along the line where the equipment should be, thereby obviating trying to locate a lost shipment in transit between the express company and some dock in San Francisco. We can ship this way transportation collect into the territories, but I do not know if collect transportation can be used on foreign shipments. They will be able to tell you in Sydney when you determine which shipping line you want to use.

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As you point out, you will be incommunicado with the rest of the world for some time. In view of Jean's lucid and detailed explanation of the developments regarding the premises here, it seems to me worth while to consider making out a power of attorney for me, limited to the execution of any transactions concerning the premises at 212 West Seminary, so that any action can be taken expeditiously when the time comes. You may recall that I gave you a similar power of attorney for the same reason right after the war and this, I believe, worked to everyone's advantage at that time. Naturally, I would expect to keep you up to date on developments and get your approval of any possible moves ahead of time; but it obviates sending official affidavits, deeds, titles, etc. through the mails to Australia and back again in order to close a transaction. You can write this power out yourself, have it notarized, without benefit of legal advice, although if you have a lawyer friend in Maui it would be well to have him check it to see that you are actually saying what you intend to say from a legal standpoint. You should make it in duplicate and keep a copy for yourself. I tried to find the copy of the Power of Attorney which I gave you to enclose as a guide, but I must have thrown it out.

Many thanks for your letter and the sketches on the bracket design which may be able to be worked out. In any case we are checking into it and have called in a firm of clutch engineers to look over our problem. They also manufacture a variety of industrial clutches.

We have received quite a variety of mail, mostly having to do with transfer of address and deposit receipts from the Harris Trust. In the future, I will use my own judgment in sending mail along to you, but to date most of it has not required any action. Probably this will continue to be the case.

Here's hoping you are getting organized and are able to take off for Sydney on schedule. Please let us hear from you before you leave, including your flight plan and ETA. Also, be sure and drop us a line as soon as you arrive in Sydney, letting us know you made it in good shape. Be careful of those Aussie women because the boys stationed down there during the war had some tall tales to tell. All the best from all of us, and here is hoping your experiences down there are stimulating and fruitful. Love, from all of us,

Jean & Schuyler