

1956, Dec. 20

Dr. Frederick C. Leonard,
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Los Angeles 24, Calif.

Dear Frederick:

Would there be any chance of several of us working together on the possible ultimate acquisition of the meteorite Mr. Van Long of Chickasha, Oklahoma has?

Quite probably you have precedence over me in so far as knowing about the meteorite is concerned and in contacting Mr. Van Long. I came into the picture last February when I was investigating a peculiar noise heard over Oklahoma--to this good day the army officially denies it was due to jet planes, and since it was cloudy I still believe it may have been due to a detonating meteor. At any rate, Long happened to hear this noise, saw my publicity about it, and wrote me about his meteorite.

It was quite obvious from the start that he would be a difficult individual to deal with in so far as acquiring the meteorite was concerned, so I did not press the matter. Ultimately we went to see him and it turned out (1) that he was very provoked at the University of Oklahoma for having cut the meteorite into some four pieces (as I now recall) when he claimed to have made arrangements to have only a small end piece taken off; and (2) that he was not at all disposed to let go of the meteorite unless he was offered a fantastic price for it; e.g., if we were Texas oil men and would make offers on a scale fitting to such positions!!!!

I didn't even make him an offer then, but we spent the rest of the day canvassing the region, urging others to be on the lookout for possible additional specimens, since this was a typical very old object with oxidized exterior. Several months later when I wrote breaching the subject with him again, he replied and told me for the first time that you had made a firm offer. He had told me the first time that the U. S. National had written, but he had not responded to them, and I had asked Henderson what he knew about it, which is what aroused his activity.

I replied to him that I would match, but not exceed you offer, with the modification that I would be willing for him to specify how the portions should be divided. I figured he might want a slice to go to you, that he might want a slice to go to U. S. National, or might even soften and want a slice to go to Oklahoma University. I figured he would want to keep one end piece, either major or minor. Naturally I wanted a slice or piece. He doesn't seem to want to do anything about it right now, and I think frankly it would be best to leave him along. He feels ethically obligated to you, with which I have no quarrel. Still it strikes me that if we could all work together we might do more good than waiting separately.

Your reactions would be appreciated. Merry Christmas to you and yours.

Yours sincerely,