1956, July 25.

Dear Walter:

I have located your letter, which had slipped behind my piled-up desk at home, and wan t to answer and comment on a few points therein.

I have quoted your comments on the visual use of a Schmidt to the boy who was planning on trying it. I think he had already convinced himself it wasn't feasible, and will try to adapt his apparatus to photographic use. Thanks for troubling yourself with the proposition.

I am interested in the fact that you and the U. of Neb. get such a different ground point for the Dec. 17th "fall". My general experience has been that independent workers ordinarily arrive at pretty much the same probable "strewn field", as Las Pat likes to call it. (For some reason I don't like that phrase.) In one Oklahoma fireball investigation I may have quoted to you, Stockwell and I started from opposite sides and met on the same farm as a spot within the probable area of fall. Wylie worked the same object a few weeks later and differed from us somewhat, but I think our suspected areas would have all nearly overlapped with not over 5 to 10 mile spreads at the most.

I also wonder greatly at the action of the U. of N. in advising you to cease and desist to avoid "hard feelings". I have run into this attitude some and have never understood it. It frankly makes me pretty furious and actually at times spurred me on to greater efforts. I don't like an attitude on the part of anyone, individual or institution, to the effect that they have a pre-emptive right to meteorite.

I recall offhand only one case where much additional material was found near an old stone; it's one the U. of Texas has from Condho Draw, Glasscock County, Texas, if I remember aright. They have not published on it, but the investigator went back to where the stone had been partly dug out of the ground, and by excavating around it found a line of material including one or two fairly large pieces several feet away. I don't recall the exact distances; I have them somewhere in my messed-up notes; I believe it was maybe as much as 10 or 15 feet.

I think in the case just mentioned, pieces of the stone had sheared due to the compressional effects of plowing into the ground; the man who did the work had the very definite feeling that the stone fell at a very low slope and with high speed. This is contrary to a lot of reports and opinions in many cases. In spite of what we read in many learned papers, I still we don't know too much about terminal velocities on meteorites. This meteorite was something over 300 pounds, a rather large one found by a rancher who recognized the part protruding from the ground as something unusual.

I have the impression that Henderson any many others are not much interested in old stones. There seems to be little that they can do with them chemically because of the widespread oxidation, and as I understand it petrographically water has actually percolated thru and thru the mass. I used to think that a stone of the kind you found was perhaps 50 to 100 years old, but the longer I gathered meteorites the more I became convinced their time on earth has been nearer 1,000 years or even multiples of that.

I'm very sorry to hear some one got off with your Norton specimen. Do try to trail the guy and get it back, because that is a rare thing and he didn't treat you right by carting it off.

More in due course. I am pleased to hear you are about to re-mount the 10". I may have mentioned to you that I have had a 12" Pyrex mirror finished by Barnes, one of Alvin Clark Co., but later on his own in California, for some 10 years or so. I recently took steps to have it mounted in a fiberglass tube, but I still have the problem of a mounting to overcome. I may temporarily adapt it to an old Ford axle mount still standing but now uselss at Las Estrellas. It is about an f 6.0 with a big flat and really designed at one time for faint objects, such as variables and comets; maybe I can use a small flat and work on Mars some this fall. Hopes spring eternal-er in astronomers' breasts!

OEM