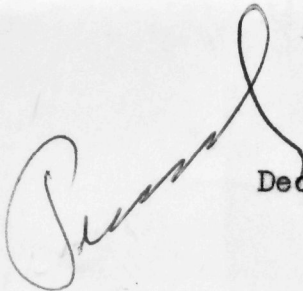


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December 16, 1953

My dear Friend:

I cannot tell you how much pleasure your letter of December 9 gave Marion and me yesterday on its receipt. You and your family, I am sure I need not tell you, are often and very much in our thoughts for the long association and friendship with you is something which Marion and I cherish very much and the longer we live the better we know that old friends are the best. It was wonderful to hear from you and to know that the family are all well and I am sure that it must give you a great deal of happiness to have the family close to you and especially your daughter, who is so helpful to you. I hope that you will give particularly to her our love and good wishes.

You are very kind about what you say concerning my actuation in Belgium and I would indeed have been happy to be there for the inauguration of the new establishment of the General Motors concerning which so many years ago we talked so much, and it was with the combined efforts of you and myself that the beginnings of this factory were made. It is wonderful to think that it has developed into such a fine establishment. I often think that the years which I was privileged to spend in Antwerp were among the happiest and in some ways the most productive of my life. It was possible to do so many things after a devastating war from which Belgium and Antwerp had suffered so much because you as burgomaster of the city were so understanding of the problems of the city which had to be solved. I cannot tell you what a satisfaction it was to work with you in those days and it must be very encouraging and a great satisfaction for you to see that so much of what Antwerp is today is due to the constructive work which you did as burgomaster.

It is now six years since I retired from the Foreign Service and six years that I am with this company. My work with Mexlight has been an interesting experience and one which has given me a great deal of satisfaction. I know how important electricity is in the economy of any country and especially in the economy of countries such

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as these of Latin America where it is the principal source of motive power as well. Electricity is really the basis of the industrial structure of every one of the countries of Latin America and will increasingly play the same role in the other aspects of the economic life of the countries as it is in more advanced countries like yours and mine. I am so firmly a believer in personal initiative and private enterprise and I am convinced that a country not attached to this principle cannot prosper and be strong or really happy that I have felt during these last six years with Mexlight that I am not only working for a company but also for the maintenance of a principle which is so important in the life of this country and every country. You will be glad to know that we have made great progress in Mexico in this respect in the last years and while it is always a struggle and a real one to maintain sound ideas, I feel that through what we have done in Mexlight in Mexico we have not only strengthened the position of our company but have made a great contribution to the economic life of the country and the maintenance of sound principles.

I had my 70th birthday last October. I feel in my spirit as young as at 30. Physically I am very happy to say that both Marion and I are keeping well. During a recent stay in New York during October and November I had two operations in the Lenox Hill Hospital, which were really in the nature of repair jobs and they both turned out very successfully and I am completely over the effects thereof and am having the benefit of this surgical intervention. I felt very flattered indeed when at the age of 70 my doctor and the surgeon felt that such a repair job was worth while. I still keep working much the same hours and am rather ashamed to confess that I still go to my office a little after 8 in the morning and seldom leave it in the evening before 7. I do feel, however, that I should begin to take things more easily and there are some things which I should like to do, perhaps to write a little, so you must not be surprised if you should learn that I am separating myself from some of the major responsibilities which I am carrying.

This will not mean that I shall be in any way less interested in seeing that the affairs of this company prosper and it will not mean any lessened interest in the development of the country in which I am making my home. In any large establishment such as Mexlight, continuity has a great significance and so far as the company is concerned my principal interest is that there should be someone to carry on effectively the work which I have been endeavoring to do.

You will be glad to know that our friend Dannie Heineman, who is now 81, is well and in fact as active as

ever and I am glad to say interested as much as ever in the many constructive things which he has been doing these many years. He is really an extraordinary man and few men have accomplished in business what he has accomplished in his lifetime. He can have the satisfaction of knowing, I believe, that no living man has been the principal element and creator of more electric energy in various parts of the world than he, and we all know the role which electricity plays not only in the industrial and general economic life of countries but also in the untold happiness, comfort and amusement of untold millions of people. Aside from these interests in business, Dannie has had as you know this extraordinary interest and great understanding of developments in so many fields and particularly the political and major economic field in Europe and in other countries. I recall very pleasantly the last evening which Mr. Heine- man and Marion and I had the privilege of spending with you and your family in your home in Antwerp.

My interest in what is going on in the world has not abated, but I have not been able to follow many things as closely as I did over so many years, as I have been absorbed during the last years so much by my association with Mexlight and the demands it made on my time were complete. My greatest unhappiness is that so many of the friends with whom I worked for so many years and who were playing important roles in what is going on in many fields are passing away, but I have through many of my old associates been able to maintain a close contact with a good deal that passes behind the scenes. What a pleasure it would be to see you again and to have some evenings together when we could tranquilly talk things over as we used to do. I see no trip to Europe in the immediate prospect, but I hope very much that in the next year or two Marion and I may be able to visit Belgium and to have the opportunity of seeing you and the family again.

I am glad that you mentioned Mr. Le Hodey and Mr. Naessens, who will be coming to Mexico. I note that Mr. Le Hodey will be accompanied by his wife and I appreciate very much your telling me about their coming. The Belgian Minister here and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Loridan, are charming people and he is a very capable man. He has spent a good lot of time in Mexico, first as Counselor of the Legation and now as Minister. He knows the country well and I am sure that you will be glad to know that Belgian interests in Mexico are in his good hands. I will get in touch with him and tell him that when Mr. Le Hodey and Mr. Naessens arrive I will appreciate his letting me know, as I shall look forward to seeing them and you may be sure that any courtesies I may be able to show them or any help which we may be able to give them, will be a pleasure.

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It was more than thoughtful of you to write me on the occasion of Christmas and to anticipate our usual Christmas card, which I am sure by this time you must have received. Marion is very well and as you will note from the picture much more slender, and as I told you, I am really feeling wonderfully fit. Marion joins me in thanking you for your letter and in wishing you and your daughter and the whole family a very happy Christmas and a New Year filled with a very full measure of all good things. I know that always, but at certain times particularly such as Christmas, you must all be very sad for you miss the great lady who accompanied you in life for so many years and whom we remember, Marion and I, with so much affection.

We shall be thinking of you at Christmas and I hope that it may not be too long before we have the pleasure of seeing you.

It just occurs to me that I should add a word to say that the new Canadian Ambassador to Belgium and Madame Hebert are very close friends of ours and are really charming people. They are both French Canadians and he is a very capable man and I am very happy indeed that he has been sent by his government to Brussels. I took the liberty of saying to him that he should call on you and convey the affectionate good wishes of Marion and myself, which I am sure that he will be doing not long after his arrival in Brussels towards the latter part of December.

Believe me,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

George S. Messersmith

GSM/cbc