

5208 Glenwood Road
Bethesda, Maryland
January 9, 1949

Dear Uncle Ted and Blisses,

I have put the boy in a tubful of water along with two bears (plastic), one cork (Kressmann's Dry Monopole, Bordeaux) and one unidentifiable part of some antique toy. Let us hope they don't all drown while I dash off a reply to Uncle Ted's kind letter, received today.

Your trip sounded wonderful, absolutely wonderful. Your description of the brain ride from Mexico to Vera Cruz brought tears to these old eyes. I can smell the babies and the tortillas fritas now! I know my deep sympathy is wasted on you, but I do sympathize with you for having to ride so very far in buses, just the same. As for your brother Morris, I follow his poems and stories in the New Yorker with wholly unwarranted proprietary pride, but I didn't know about his books. I miss no opportunities for telling my friends and acquaintances that I know Morris Bishop's brother and he's very nice, the brother, I mean. Now I shall add, the Morris Bishop who writes books' brother. If you want to, I'll let you tell your friends that you know Philinda Krieg, the sister of the John W. Campbell, Jr. who writes books. No one, alas, has paid much attention to them as yet, but it just goes to show that a prophet is not without honor save in his own country, and I'm sure they read John's books in Russia, because they are all about atomic fission and such-like deep matters. I read one of them myself, and understood part of it the second time.

Our lives are very domestic up here, but thank goodness this is a good place to find baby sitters, so every once in a while we go out for an evening. Likewise we have people in now and then. Thank goodness we aren't expected to do as much entertaining as we did in Caracas, or I should be far more of a harrassed housewife than I already am. One good thing about the set-up here is that the foreigners have to entertain us for a change. It's a delight to be able to go out to some Latin American Embassy and have them fawn all over you rather than vice versa, as it was down in Caracas. I take a snide sort of pleasure in watching the Latins fall all over themselves making us happy at cocktail parties, especially since I spent so many fruitless hours trying to entertain Venezuelans down there. Venezuelans would die rather than admit they are having a good time at a party, so of course they are usually miserable. They are certainly quite different in their national characteristics from the Mexicans.

.... I have yet to finish a letter in only one session. Intervention is Laurence John's settled policy.

In spite of the long silence between my letters, I have never forgotten you nice, nice people. I am so glad that you are all as usual, and that Uncle Ted is still doing inexplicable things like riding in buses. I wonder how your harem is coming on, and how all the young ladies are doing, and who the new additions may be. I fail to imagine a harenless Uncle Ted. Inconceivable!

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We were sort of sad on leaving beautiful Caracas, although having spent four years there I was ready to move on. William told the people in the State Department that he was willing to go anywhere, but would prefer not to come to Washington just at this time, so of course and needless to say, they immediately assigned him here. He is Assistant Chief of the Division of North and West Coast Affairs of the American Republics Affairs Office, which means nothing to you and very little to me, his wife. The only possible advantage to the title that I can see is that it's very handy for baffling the young ladies in the Credit Departments who ask me, "And just what is your husband's position in the State Department?" It invariably stops them dead in their tracks, and I love to watch them struggle over trying to put it all down in the little row of dotted lines assigned to applicant's Business. I have been an arch enemy of the young ladies in the Credit Departments ever since the young lady at Macy's said she'd never heard of the State Department, never heard of the Foreign Service, never heard of the Diplomatic Service, and never heard of consulates either, but was I trying to say my husband was in the Army? Well anyway, William likes his job here very much, and is fond of his boss, a really fine man named Sheldon Mills. But having been perhaps irremediably softened by the ease of life in warm and beservanted climates, we are trying not to count the days too much till our next foreign assignment. It will be three or four times 365 days anyway, so too difficult to count. And meanwhile my slothful character is being improved beyond recognition. I'd had no idea I could do so many things I didn't want to do at once! We shall probably lose a great deal of money on this nice little house we had to buy in order to obtain a roof, because as everyone always rushes over to tell us, the real estate market in the Washington area is losing ground daily. But it is a nice house, next to some woods, with a screened porch in back, and an automatic washing machine in the kitchen (thank goodness!), and a guest room upstairs for people like you. I personally with my own baby hands made the curtains and even dust ruffles and a bedspread for the guest room. I can't sew, though, so that bedspread is something to see. The curtains were harder to ruin, but the bedspread is amazing, simply amazing. I sometimes have to explain to the less discerning exactly what it's supposed to represent as it lies there on the bed. I worked on it while William read aloud to me from Gibbon, so now every inept stitch reminds me of some of the less noble Romans.

Alcoa
(acronym for
Aluminum
Company of
America)

We left our happy home, and our dear Rita and Ottavia, on May 5th, taking an Alcoa boat to New Orleans, so we could go to Texas and see William's sister. Laurence John began being seasick when the ship sailed out beyond the mole at La Guaira, and he kept on being seasick daily and sometimes at first hourly, until we reached New Orleans and the shelter of the Mississippi, or however you spell it. William and I felt fine, and the sea was calm as could be. The ship's doctor informed me heartily that small children NEVER get seasick, so I was forced to take him to our cabin, where the very atmosphere itself convinced him that sedatives were in order. From then on our trip followed about the same happy pattern, which was why we were willing to buy a house and settle down by the end of the summer. And there you have our story, up till now.
Affectionately,