

April 19, 1949. Bethesda

Dear Pop,

We received the Operations Vittles cookbook, and have been showing it to everyone since then. Certainly a historic document, if only in a small way. I was proud to see Helen's contribution, and never fail to point it out to those who see the book. Thanks for sending it.

Last Thursday we went over to see some friends of William's Fletcher School days, the John Champmans, who also had with them their good friends the Fishburns, at whose house we first met the Champmans here. A good time was had by all, and much discussion. We went over to Sunday supper ~~amxxx~~ at Cousin Gertrude's house. Young Dick was home for the holidays, looking to me just as he did when I last saw him years ago. Only now he is large and very good looking. A really fine looking young man. He is graduating in Chemical Engineering next June from Columbia, and after that he will go to work for Proctor and Gamble, Helen's old firm. When you see Gertrude you may tell her I said Dick was a credit to the family- something I think she already knows, but a little reassurance won't hurt. We are having the Hagers and Shelly Mills and Francesca over to supper tomorrow night, by the way. Gertrude says she won't go over to Europe till July or so, although Walter is leaving right after Wilson College closes. Gertrude wants to stay while Dick takes a little holiday before going to work. P.S. No, it was Borden's that was Helen's company, wasn't it? I always forget whether I should buy more soap or more milk. I just remember it was something eminently wholesome.

We are going to an African reunion on Saturday at the home of our old Military Observer friend from Lagos days, Col., formerly Major, Homer Heller. He is asking Mr. Shantz and Andy Lynch, also. It should be nostalgic and interesting. By the way, we spent last Friday and Saturday evenings reading a book by one "Micheal Head", otherwise John Cannaday, who was BEW man in Leopoldville while we were there and supports himself by writing mysteries while he is being a professor at the University of Virginia. We found the book exiting because it was called "The Cabinda Affair", was all about Africa, and dedicated to John Houser. While we were in Lagos there was a great to-do about Cabinda, which is a small part of Portuguese West Africa slightly cut off from Angola. John Houser suspected some dirty work at the crossroads in connection with a contract for supplying mahogany to the U.S. Gov't. Cannaday has changed their circumstances greatly, but this book also deals with a phony mahogany contract in Cabinda, and all in all fascinated us. I still remember with a thrill the days in Lagos when John Houser and the two of us were busy trying to get to the bottom of the real "Cabinda Affair", when I would stay down in the office furiously encoding telegrams to the Department till all hours, and we would all get together and discuss ways and means upstairs afterward. It was one of the most interesting phases of the Lagos period, and being secret and confidential I couldn't write to you about it. since it was

I've also been reading a good book on Latin American history. It's the first good book on the subject I've read since Prescott. I've tried several others and been bored to distraction and to the point of not being able to finish them, a thing I rarely do. This one is by a man named Crow, and is called "The Epic of Latin America"

-2-

This book covers the field pretty well, brings up a thousand and one points I had never even heard about, doesn't drag in every singletary solitary revolution that ever occurred down there, and is tactful at the same time truthful. Some day when you retire you might read it, because it is really fascinating. I am amused by the way the author invariably quotes some local Latin American historian whenever he has something unpleasant to say about local customs or events. The praises he sings are always in his own words, the evil that men do is always described in their own words. An astute system.

Laurence John has gained weight and height in the past months, and has become something of a social butterfly. Gone are the days when I knew where he was at any given moment, but so far it has agreed with him, and given him a better appetite than last year. He wants to be playing with one of the children all the time, and is unbearable if for any reason he can't go out. Of course I wanted this to happen, but I also wanted to have some vague general idea of where he was and what he was doing. As it is, he disappears in less than a minute and while my days are thus made freer, my anxiety is increased. Every time he re-appears after one of his daily disappearing acts I am thankful that one more day has passed with out serious accident. I have come to regard filthy, muddy, tarry, sandy, soaking clothes with the greatest equanimity, but I can't get over the anxious feeling till he comes back again out of the nowhere. I shall be very, very glad when September comes and he starts to go to that Nursery school (if all goes well with transportation and finance.) He has found another small playmate in the little girl who lives in back of us. Her name is Susan, and he took up with her only recently, when Betsey and Coit were out of the running due to sickness. Susans mother told me he is always quite good, quiet and polite when he is over there, and that the two children play well together. I was proud to hear that he was polite while away from home- something one would scarcely guess from the way he acts at home. They said they didn't believe him when he told them he was three years old. His admirers often say this, for he is large and smart for his age. Sometimes I am one of his admirers and sometimes not. However, he-already knows his left from his right better than his mamma ever did or ever will, so I suppose it may be just jealousy on my part. He is currently interested in triangles, rectangles, and circles. He hasn't gotten them down correctly yet, with the exception of circles, but he is working on the problem vigorously, and we often discuss the whole business at lunch. He is also interested in the days of the week now, and is trying to figure it all out. He always wants to know what day it is when he wakes up in the morning. When I say something in French, he tells me what language it's in, and the same thing with Spanish, although he has forgotten the latter and never knew the former. He can tell from the sounds. The other day William was saying apropos of something or other, "Well, toujours gai!" and old Laurence John added, "As the Fwench say!" When he is not trying my patience beyond the breaking point I'm very fond of him and proud of him, and I want you to come and see him as soon as you can.

Lovingly,