

Bethesda, October 18, 1949

Dear Daddy,

I've been hurrying through my chores in order to answer your letter about ohn, which arrived at breakfast time. Daar Pop, I'm so very, very sorry you were worried about it. I can perfectly understand your expressed reasons for being worried, and if you have more than that, I imagine I can understand them somewhat also. Digging around in the mind does seem to be a rather perilous sort of archeology for amateurs. That is the aspect of it that worries Dona and mother. But ohn claims he has had nothing but good from it, mentally and physically. You must remember that I haven't seen him at all, and only know about what was in his letter to me and what Dona has told me. Frankly, I am just as worried about the effect of the experiments on Dona as I am on ohn, but I may have one of those hasty impressions which can later be proved all wrong, or too out of context to be right. She feels very neglected, and indeed is very neglected. She said she had one or two short hypnotic sessions which cured her of headaches, but didn't want to go into it farther. She is bored with hearing about it exclusively on the rare occasions when she sees ohn. I feel sorry for her, and heartily wish ohn could somehow see how it affects her. But from his letter I gather he is in perfect love and charity with her after delving down into his mind, and is just as unaware as he ever was before, that his hobby horses have led him to distant places and away from her. However, all this is really off the subject completely, and since I don't know Dona well enough to know how she really feels inside, it is pointless, in a way, for me to try to comment. I can only say what any outsider could say, that she has been remarkably patient through the years, and it would seem that she deserves more conscious, active loving attention than she gets. I'm sure ohn means no harm whatsoever. He apparently can't see things from her point of view at all. And that leads me to my rightful subject finally, which is this business of his not writing to you. I understand that he has asked Dona to write to you instead, but she says she won't write his letters for him. Now if she feels as neglected as she might with reason feel, this attitude is understandable with relation to him, if not from your standpoint. I don't know her. Perhaps she herself is as incapable of understanding the other person's point of view as ohn is. Perhaps you know her better than I do, and can answer that question. Not being without that of any other sin, I am not qualified to throw stones. As I say, I feel sorry for her and am in a state to forgive her obvious faults with regard to you. I really hope you will feel the same way. In any case I'm certain it is ohn she is out of sorts with, and not at all you.

As for ohn's feeling he can't communicate with you, I honestly and truly wouldn't worry about that for a minute, if I were you. Heavens, you know ohn! You know he has always been an experimentalist, and out-and-outer who would give up eating and sleeping and his own and everyone else's comfort for the sake of his experimental methods! That's all he's doing now. At the beginning of his interest in this system of psychoanalysis he called mother on the telephone for the first time in a year, talked for two hours, and then hasn't spoken or written her a word since then. But mother isn't half as worried about it as you are, perhaps because she is more accustomed to it than you are. As I get it, he doesn't want to have his pristine memories interfered with by any ogging from

you two who are naturally his early associates in those memories. He and Ron feel that it would disturb the pattern if some little familiar word or phrase was spoken which called up associated memories. OK, it's pretty far-fetched, but then John was never one to balk at difficulties and neglect details. Now I think that's the main reason for his not writing you, but actually it may be that plus ten or a dozen other reasons which appear to John good and sufficient.

And now as for the possibility that he has discovered in some "insulated and sealed" compartments of his mind, that great injustice was done him by you and mother. Well, there again I wouldn't worry if I were you, hard as it would be to stop worrying about it. In the first place, I honestly believe that there really aren't many, if any "insulated" portions of the memory. Or perhaps I mean that there aren't many sealed places. I do believe the early impressions are all there, and all have a cousinly relationship to our present-day reactions. The child is still father to the man, as people have always known, but nowadays we are apparently finding better methods of tracing the genealogy. I do think, also, that under the proper conditions it is a good thing to try to open the old festering memories, and expose them to sunlight and antiseptics. They will often be ugly, wrapped in layers and layers of home-made, mental bandages. Wouldn't it be good to get rid of the old dirty bandages that surround them? So many times it might be found that some little incident that seemed of no importance to a reasoning grown-up mind, was the root of the infection. Children can't see in proportion, but they are just as angry, just as frustrated, just as injured, and just as anxious to cover their sores with those home-made bandages as grown-ups. Only the earliest sores are bound to be the oldest, and the most infected. It seems to me that no child on earth can escape them. No parent on earth can possibly avoid inflicting many, many little injustices on his child. All without realizing it, or at least without knowing the effect that his actions may have on his child! I know I am doing it to Laurence John. I've often seen him looking at me with real hate in his eyes, because I have kept him from doing something he had his heart set on doing. Perhaps he wanted to run across the street to pat a dog, but I felt he shouldn't get into the habit of running across the street on sudden impulses. Perhaps I have insisted on his coming to lunch, finally, when he was absorbed in the task of getting himself soaked to the skin in delightful mud. Perhaps he has wanted to come with us some evening when we were going to an Embassy party. He can't possibly see the matter in perspective now, so any one or all of those frustrations which seem minor to us may turn out to be a permanent source of infection, but I can't help it. Parents simply have to go on their parental ways, and must not be surprised by reactions, I guess. The child's temporary hate is as real as a grown-up's, that's sure, and is as inevitable as dawn. How fine it would be, then if we could all go back to our queer old childish memories, get them out in the light of day, look at them with our grown-up, reasoning minds, and finally set them back where they belong. I'm sure that if I could get at my memories of you from those early times I would find the usual collection of senseless resentments, and perhaps I might even find it possible to love you even more than I do, although since

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I think I love you as much as possible already, that's hard for me to believe. But I'm sure that you tried as best you knew how to be kind and just to us both when we were children. I'm just as sure of that as I'm sure that from our childish point of view you didn't always succeed. No parent on earth, I'm convinced, can do his duty by his child and still completely avoid hurting the child's infant sensibilities. And that's why I think you should just try to ignore John's uncommunicativeness at this point, and above all not try to look back and remember what you may have done to annoy him as a child. Of course you annoyed him, but you couldn't help it in the least, and that's that. You did your best, mother did her best, and according to our different natures we love you and honor you for it, both of us. The older we get, the more prospective we have, the more we love you. Brother is merely going off in the desert to meditate for a while, and it may be that he'll come out cured of some inevitable childish quirks.

William and I have had a horrible blow this weekend. Our dear, lovable friend Allan Dawson committed suicide in Santiago on Saturday. He had already had two nervous breakdowns, and although he didn't appear abnormal to his colleagues down there, he had complained of tiredness and insomnia recently. I have gone through the usual stages of numbness followed by weeping followed by something more like acceptance. I have been helped in my own grief by being able to pray a little, and perhaps also by being more able to understand his seemingly incomprehensible action than William and other people who have never been in the strange, moonlit world of insanity. I know that one can suddenly find oneself lost and hopeless in that other world, and that the logic of the normal world can melt away in a moment, giving place to another set of values which seem to be as real and solid as those of the sane. But poor Allan! He must have been in a harrasing hell, and have felt there was no one to help him. He was such a good, kind, gentle man! and so much more vulnerable than anyone thought. He was a man of good will, for whom we think there should be peace on earth, but there wasn't. I'm praying that God will give it to him now.

I do so hope you'll not worry about John's experiments and the silence he feels they entail.

William seems pleased with his new position in the re-organization. His title was more impressive before, and he was formerly Acting ~~Chief~~ Assistant Chief of the whole North and West Coast Division. But he was receiving the salary of only a plain desk officer for Venezuela nonetheless. He rather hopes, I think, that they will give him a raise now that he is officially chief of only half the Division. At least he is no longer a mere "Acting", and it seems to me (as I busily count my chickens before they hatch) that they must in all fairness begin to give him the salary commensurate with his great new dignity, since even they admit officially now that he is no longer a mere desk officer. Quite needless to say, I have already put the imaginary extra dollars in that bank account of ours which has become increasingly imaginary in the last year! There's nothing in the world more fun than playing around with unhatched chickens. I have a recipe for cooking each and every potential hen! All our love,

Transcription: I have a recipe for cooking each and every potential hen! All our love,