

5208 Glenwood Road
Bethesda, Maryland
Dec. 20, 1949

Dear Aunt Vonie and Mrs. Ellis,

It was so very kind and thoughtful of you to send me the pretty crystal necklace, which arrived today in a large Army truck (much to little Laurence's delight - big trucks are one of his chief interests). It is one of the prettiest specimens of crystal I've ever seen, and it looks well with black, which I often wear. I was most pleased and grateful.

We are all excited here by the imminent arrival of Santa Claus. Poor Laurence is one of those unfortunate children who was born quite close to Christmas time, but we try always to have both birthday and Christmas presents for him, and I think next year we will celebrate his birthday in the middle of summer to put more distance between his two big celebrations of the year. He had his fourth birthday on the eleventh of this month, and we had two of his little friends in to have supper and help eat the birthday cake. He chose the cake himself at the bakers, rejecting utterly a pretty pink one with roses on it, so the baker promised to make him a manly sort of cake with airplanes and trucks on it instead. It was a huge success, and his two guests agreed with him that roses would have been far too sissy for a big four-year-old boy's birthday cake! For Christmas Santa Claus is going to bring him such things as a Railway Express truck, a garbage truck (!) a road grader, and a cement mixer. He says he wants to be an engineer when he grows up. He is going to marry the little girl down the street, also, and has already asked her. She said she thought she would marry him if her mother lets her! But in spite of all his grown-up ways he is still very attached to a teddy bear named Brownie, who sleeps in his bed and consoles him when he is crying. He feels very superior indeed to Brownie, now that he is four, because Brownie came last year in his Christmas stocking, and is therefore only one year old. Poor Brownie doesn't seem to mind, however. I am sending you a picture of Laurence which was taken recently, with his favorite bright red plaid shirt on.

We had a wonderful visit with Jeannette and Norman and the children this summer. As you know, they drove here all the way from Texas. The baby had changed a great deal since we saw him in 1948. Barbara is the prettiest thing in the world, ~~at~~ a real joy to look at. William says she looks just the way her mother did at that age. Laurie is a sweet little boy, sentimental and affectionate in spite of looking just like a miniature prize-fighter. But Robert is the funniest thing in the world. He looks like a little angel, with blond hair and dark brown eyes, but my, what a boy! He teased the life out of my Laurence, although he is not yet two years old. Still he knew just how to tease! He used to come down the stairs in the morning shouting "I EAT, I EAT!", and Janie and I would scurry around to get little Robert fed before anyone. He's the real king of the Drake family. Jeannette is kept busy from early morning to late at night with the three of them, and I admired her patience enormously. I imagine she must have the same patience that her mother and William's had, for when I was in Newark the ladies all told me how sweet and patient Helen Krieg always was. I wish I could have

-2-

Jeannette and William and I had very little time to talk while they were here, sad to say, because we were always so busy taking care of the four little children under five years old, to say nothing of the four grown-ups! But I was glad of the chance to see them all, just the same.

William's work is very long and tiring, but he is enjoying it a lot, I think, so that makes up for it. He has recently been promoted to a higher position at the State Department, which cheers him up a good deal. You will be pleased to hear that the Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America told me at a reception the other day that as "long as I'm in charge of Latin America Bill is going to stay here- we need more men like him". Of course I was so proud to hear that I could hardly contain myself. I should like to go shouting that remark from the house-tops, but alas, the wife isn't supposed to boast about her husband! I know you won't hold it against me if I tell you, however!

We got a letter from William's father the other day in which he said he would be coming to pay us a visit here sometime in January or February, and that pleases us very much. When we were in Newark in the summer of 1948 we could only stay a little while, and Laurence John was sort of ill from all the changes and traveling he had done, so this will give the grandfather and the grandson a real chance to get acquainted. As a matter of fact, our young Laurence is going to have visits from both his grandfathers this coming year, for my father is returning from a long stay in Europe in March and plans to come to Washington for several months. He was in Germany, with the occupation, and then took a temporary position with the Telephone Company in Madrid, Spain, but now he is finally going to retire from business.

Laurence is going to nursery school in the morning nowadays, and he should be returning any minute now, so I must stop and prepare his lunch. I can never let him see me writing letters or reading a book, for he always interrupts me and wants to write on the typewriter himself. He considers letter-writing a form of laziness, and he will never let me sit down in peace to write! He is learning to write by hand and by the typewriter himself, but is naturally not much of an expert yet! He only wants to write words like "truck", "Bulldozer", "Dog", etc., because those are the only things that interest him.

Once again let me thank you for your kind thoughtfulness in sending me the necklace, which I will always treasure because of its beauty as well as the loving kindness which prompted you to send it to me.

Affectionately,