

5208 Glenwood Road
Bethesda, Maryland
Nov. 9, 1948

Dear John and Dona,

Here is Pop's letter. He also sent me yours to him of Oct. thirteenth, and I found it most interesting. I was particularly pleased to hear about Peedee's dental experiences, because we had been thinking about that sodium fluoride business for L.J. The dentist here told me he wouldn't do anything more than look over my child's mouth as yet, in order to build up an idea that the dentist isn't such a rat after all, in which matter we are in agreement. L.J. still asks suspiciously if unidentified men are doctors, although it has been eight or ten months since his last experience in the hospital in Caracas, where he had his stomach pumped out due to having swallowed a match. He has kept away from matches and doctors ever since then. I want him to think that dentists aren't quite so bad.

Things are finally settling down to some sort of order here. Dona will be horrified to learn that I sewed up a whole slew of curtains, bedspreads, and dust-fuffles myself personally by hand, with highly amateurish results which please me enormously nonetheless. They are my babies, see? Since I don't know how to use one of those sewing machines, I am reluctantly forced to make things by hand. My task is lightened in the evening however, when William reads aloud to me from Gibbon's Decline and Fall, a book which he and I came to love down in Caracas. It's wonderful escape reading, and extremely well written. Down there when time was all I had on my hands day in and day out I managed to finish both volumes of the old Modern Library edition in a matter of two months, but heaven only knows how long it will take old William to finish. But it's the sort of thing you can pick up here and there happily, since we all know what happens in the end.

Old Laurence John is coming on apace. His conversation is wonderful and strange. The other day we heard him, in the midst of a long and half-heard soliloquy, shout out "But it's so stupid, that's what I can't understand! Why do they do it?" We never found out what he considered so stupid, but it gave us to think. He still switches suddenly from being an engineer to being a garbage truck driver to being a bulldozer operator to being a little teddy bear to being a squirrel to being a milkman, and we have to be careful what we call him if we wish to placate him, for he will not obey when called by the wrong name and it's rather hard to keep up with his metamorphoses. I told him he was the Metamorphosis Kid the other day, and he said he had seen a GREAT BIG metamorphosis at the zoo last Sunday, so that settled that. When asked who won the elections he will joyfully respond "Uncle Hawwy did!" He wants to know about what the sun is, and what the stars are, and if the sun is a star, dove see it at night in the sky along with the other stars? If not WHY not? His best friends are Herb the milk man and Mr. Garbage. Virginia Davis, my Caracas friend now in Washington, showed him her silver fox scarf the other night and told him it was a nice soft little bunny. "That's not a rabbit," corrected L.J. "Well then, it must be a hop toad," amended a chastened Virginia. "Hop toads don't have fur," announced Laurence John, "They have skin. Bunnies have fur and dogs have fur but hop toads and Laurence John have skin." Virginia retired from the fray in complete rout, but L.J. didn't hold her ignorance against her. I sincerely hope that in later years John and Laurence John will get along well together, and that L.J. will really be able to have the advantage of listening to ~~her~~ Uncle John explain things. Hard as it is at this point to see where L.J.'s future interests will lie, I have

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reasons to hope that they will lie in the direction of things scientific or at least mechanical. Brother John always used to be able work up my interest in his subjects, and if he could with such a scape-grace as me, I should think he could do so twice as well with a young person with more marked scientific leanings, in which class I devoutly hope Laurence John will be numbered. In any case, I hope you won't forget, as I haven't that if it is at all possible and convenient, I should be more than grateful if L.J. could spend some of his adolescent time with you in exchange for my having the pleasure of a long, long visit from Peedee and/or Leslyn, in whatever part of the world we may then be.

It's wonderful to have a home again after so much knocking about from hotel to post, and it was particularly fine to put away the last suitcase. For two months I was convinced that I would perish completely before the work was done, but as you note I survived. Now that Christmas is coming up I have a feeling work is piling up once more, though, and me with one more bedspread to make! In the matter of Christmas presents, I asked Pop to make a list of things Helen needed, but before the list finally arrived I had given up hope, and gone out and bought a whole batch of fancy groceries which I thought they would not be likely to have access to over there, and the groceries are now presumably on their way. So perhaps you and the children could chose from the list Pop encloses in this letter if you haven't already sent off your presents.

I hope that you will be able to come down to Washington some time, in a body or individually, and stay with us. We have a guest room with a double bed, and we could probably roust around for some small beds. In fact we do have a porch chaise longue with a Simmons mattress which can be used as a single bed very comfortably. We should be simply delighted if you ever could come, so think about it, won't you?

Time to get lunch.

Love,