

5208 Glenwood Road
Bethesda, Maryland
March 3, 1949

Dear Family,

I'm so far behind in my letters! Excuse me, excuse me.

My usual punishment is upon me, and as always I am at a loss where to begin. So I'll begin with mother's visit, which occurred sometime between two and three weeks ago. It gave me a chance to do several things I'd been putting off for lack of an opportunity to leave during the day for any length of time. (My free Thursdays reduce themselves to the afternoon from one thirty to four, somehow). I went to call on Catherine Breuer, a task I'd been putting off not only because boy-sitting duties. Catherine kindly had me over for lunch, and since she is a most courageous woman, I kept having the thought that she was boosting up my spirits, rather than vice versa, as it should have been. I shall have to have her over here for lunch next week, and hope I can sound more cheerful and easy. Her little boy's death is never quite far enough from my mind for comfort. I also took advantage of grandmamma's presence to go and sit with the Melaney children down the street while their mamma went shopping. Coit and Betsey Melaney have recently become Lawrence John's friends, due to a masterfully sly campaign on my part, involving distribution of chocolates and readings-aloud every other morning. L.J. is really a little young for them (C. is five and a scholar, Betsey is four) But they are the only children for him to play with, and fortunately they take a most tolerant attitude. L.J. and I had been getting on each others nerves, nursery school costs forty dollars a month, so I figured that the expense of my morning's work in reading to them, etc., was a good investment. He now goes out and plays with them quite often, returning refreshed but dirty.

While Grandmamma was here to sit for us we had several gay evenings. We celebrated Allan Dawson's birthday with a dinner and dancing party at the Shoreham Hotel, which was quite a novelty for us, and most pleasant. We went to a cocktail party at the home of Bob Woodward (Assistant Chief of American Republics Affairs) and another in honor of Ambassador Donnelly at Shelly Mills' house. The Ambassador looked as handsome, as suave, and as nervous as ever. He is here on an important consultation, and without Dona Maria Elena and the four children, who are currently installed in their lovely new home in the Country Club, which suits their tastes and needs so much better than the old Embassy residence did. We went over to the Dawsons again one evening to see Jesse Knox, who was down for a weekend only from New York. Charley Knox has been very sick indeed, and is finally being shipped back home from Tel Aviv, where he has languished sick and unhappy for almost a year. Curt Barnes is still there, and still bearing up- perhaps because he was never on the Terrorists' little list. I suppose you noticed that one Foreign Service Officer was shot the other not long ago. He kindly had us over to dinner at his apartment in 1944 (the one who was killed, I mean). I trust Israel will be a healthier place from now on. As for us, we had two parties here, but I can only remember the second, which included some of William's old Fletcher School pals and was rather dull.

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Piet and Albert were due to leave for Venezuela on the 25th of Feb. complete with Billy and Michael, although the latter had recently swallowed a bottle of ink down to the dregs and was suffering from aniline-dyed diarrhea in spite of having had his stomach pumped. Piet and Albert had both hoped to get to New York about the fifteenth in order to shop and visit ~~an~~ leisure, but little Michael squashed that idea. So I thought it would be a fine idea for me to go up and help with the baby-sitting while they shopped. So Grandmamma kindly took L.J. home to Flemington with her and I went on to New York in the same train. Albert had reserved a room for me in the same hotel (Governor Clinton) and I hadn't been there an hour before we were on our way to Best's with Michael to buy his clothes and give him his first hair cut. Heavenly days what a thing that was! I followed him all around the store while Piet chose his clothes and tried unsuccessfully to get him to let her hold them up on him to see if they were the right size. He didn't like that a bit, neither did he like the elevators a bit, neither did he take to barbers and hair cuts in general. He wandered about silently on incredibly complicated routes, going on for as much as a quarter of an hour before realizing that his mother was no where in sight, whereupon he would scream piercingly. He is sixteen months old now, at the peak of his vocal powers. Well, we got him shorn and clothed, went back to the hotel, and I fed Billy down in the coffee shoppe. When the infants were finally in bed, the adults went out to dinner, footsore and weary, then on to see "The Madwoman of Chaillot", which was delightful. Next day Piet sent me on errands to Gimbels with Billy, who behaved like an angel and was rewarded by being shown the toy department and providentially, by being bought a bat - one of those fireboats with pumps that Pop brought down to Caracas for L.J. It was indeed providential, for from then on Billy was perfectly happy to sit in my bathroom out of harm's way sailing that boat. I gave him lunch once more, and relieved the regular sitter (an extremely garrulous elderly lady, from whom one escaped with great difficulty) who had been taking care of Michael that morning. She came back again in the evening and I cannily asked her to go down to my room and watch Billy, so that Piet and I could relax without her constant stream of reminiscences. We went down to the bar for some delightful whiskey sodas as soon as they were both in bed, and then on to Luchow's, where we had a most delightful and atmospheric dinner. Next morning was their sailing day, and the Caans nearly gave me nervous prostration by not getting up till eight though they had not done their packing nor completed their purchasing, and were to be on the boat by eleven A.M. Piet wanted the room to herself in order to try to pack everything (although it looked pretty hopeless to me) so she sent the boys and me down to my room right after breakfast (nine thirty!) and I set to work taking pins and price tags off innumerable garments so she could pack them as used or at least not for sale, and thus avoid the customs in Venezuela. I did about half of it before Michael realized that his amma was nowhere around, so from then on the three of us walked back and forth in the corridors trying to keep Michael in a good humor - Billy did his little best at the job, and between the two of us we kept the baby out of Piet's room most of the time. As William had predicted, Uncle Albert was nowhere to be seen, off on errands somewhere. He turned up at eleven, when they should have been on the ship, and Piet was still only halfway through the packing! Ay!

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The next hour was pretty hard on me, and I fully expected to arrive at the Grace Line docks as the Santa Rosa was pulling out. But they finally made it, even though they were delayed while I ran back to the hotel from the taxi to get some Sherry's chocolates for some friends in Caracas who had asked them to bring it. We got there after the baggage gangplank had been taken down, but the passenger gangplank was still up. I went back to the hotel and put my feet up. I have never passed though two such confused days in all my life, and I can only add that I have omitted endless details, all more confusing than the last.

Dear Uncle Albert kindly payed my hotel bill up to the time he left, as well as treating me to all the fun and frolic we had those two evenings, but I still had to get away from New York without spending my little wad at the stores. I know me, and I know that my best intentions oft lead to naught. So I craftily made an appointment at a hairdressers for that afternoon, and thus kept myself out of the stores till four o'clock. By that time there was only time to dash down to Altmans and pick out two relatively inexpensive cotton dresses before closing time. After that I had planned to take Ruth Havey out to dinner, but when I arrived at 25 Fifth Avenue I found that dear girl had made a wonderful dinner herself, so I was reduced to sending her some spring flowers next morning. We had a lovely peaceful evening, some wonderful steaks and corn on the cob. We pooled our knowledge of father's future plans, and came to the conclusion that we neither of us had the slightest idea what J.W. Campbell was planning to do or where he was planning to go. We both decided it was quite a life yours leading there, and that in your place we'd stay, but agreed that we wanted you to come back to New York ANYWAY, for our own selfish reasons.

I had luckily called Tebby and Ruth Ray before the invading army of Caans descended, so Tebby showed up from South Glastonbury, Connecticut, on Saturday morning. We talked for a while, then went to a Japanese restaurant to meet Ruthie, who was deep in the heart of moving. Ruth is doing excellently well with her painting (up to a thousand dollars for a big canvas), is most happily married to John Graham, a dentist, and appears to be in funds as well as quite pregnant. They are moving to their house in Connecticut (where little X will be able to wander among the fields and fall into the swimming pool) since their lease had expired and X is arriving in April. Ruthie very, very cheerful. She had to go back to her moving, but Tebby and I wandered up Fifth Avenue and got caught in Best's, where we succumbed to some minor purchases. Then we went up on top of Rockefeller Center to admire the view, which was beautiful and cold, before meeting Dave and Tebby's friends at the Kungsholm Restaurant, where a good time was had by all. I left next morning, relatively pleased at what was left of my wad. Mother met me in Trenton with L.J., who was overjoyed to be riding on another Diesel train, and we returned safely (though L.J. got bored and drooled very intentionally onto the floor in front of the seat in back of us, much to the horror of the seat's lady occupant.) 5208 Glenwood Rd. looked different and wonderful to me after my adventures, and I started this week with renewed faith and vigor, cleaning closets, painting beds, being patient with Laurence John till you'd hardly know me. Well, if that doesn't tell everything, at least I've tried! Love,