

January 2, 1950  
Bethesda, Md.

Dear Dona and John,

A mysterious package arrived containing an even more mysterious vehicle, which simply fascinated Laurence as well as his father and mother. "Did John invent it? It was a huge success, in any case, and something of a menace to the family safety and furniture to boot, for it and Laurence behind it kept careening around from the dining room to the kitchen to the hall to the living room to the dining room to the kitchen to the hall, etc. at a mad pace. I've never seen the like of it, although I thought I had combed through Woodward and Lothrop pretty thoroughly looking for things that would interest L.J. and the rest of the small fry on my list. Dona is a good picker, and we thank her.

Christmas went off pretty well, and we got invited out for dinner so I didn't have to make the turkey, but I thought I would perish from overwork before the day came, what with wrapping and potting and candy-and-cookie making and card writing and then the feverish addressing of more cards to people from whom we had received and to whom we hadn't sent, and tree-putting up and burnt-out light replacing and you know how it goes in general. Today, however, Laurence and a pal of his tipped over the Christmas tree so I had to take it down before I was psychologically ready to do so, and that made me unhappy. Which shows you people are never satisfied.

William is going on a wonderful trip through his territory, Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador. If I had a silverblu mink to pawn it would be in hook this very minute, but there you are. He will be leaving in March and be away for about a month and a half. Luckily for me I hope that Pop and Helen will be in Washington by that time, so I won't be able to be as miserable and lonely and envious as I was all set to be. I can hardly wait to see old Pop.

L.J. was four December 11th, and issued a Birthday Ukase or ultimatum of what have you on the occasion: "From now on, Daddy and Mamma, you must call me just Laurence, not Laurence John any more." So that's that. Actually, although I quite agree with him that one name is enough, I find it hard to remember not to call him by both of them. He's plugging away at what he calls his "office", the nursery school, and while he's not at all fond of the place, he seems to tolerate it reasonably. He is learning to write, but not on "office"-time. I thought children always learned to read before they learned to write, but he refuses to learn to read anything but what he's interested in, words like "dog, train, truck". Contrariwise he insisted on my showing him how to write, beginning on the typewriter. We've already had to have it repaired once, and it needs it again, but I figure it's all in the cause of education.

Happy new year to both of you, and an auntly kiss to each of my nieces.

Love,