

Bethesda, Thurs. July 6, 1950

Dear Pop and Putty,

Father's letter of July 2 arrived this morning, and I was glad to get it. How fortunate that I didn't have the money to pay the Railway Express man that day, since it seems they were in error somewhere! I was relieved to hear that I hadn't "queered the do" too much.

Laurence is in a state of high excitement about daddy's vacation. He is anxious to see New York, and we have promised him to stay there one day so he can ride in a subway car, a bus, and a ferry. He becomes feverishly eager whenever he thinks about it. The attraction of Long Island and the ocean is almost equally great, and we are saving up a great many engineering questions to put before Abuelito. It certainly sounds very pleasant indeed, and I hope nothing nasty happens to prevent our taking the vacation.

Speaking of which I have thought of one good thing that the ill wind of Korea has blown in this direction: the chances of arousing a sufficient number of clear-thinking senators and representatives to the danger involved in putting prohibitive excises on imported oil ~~xxxxxx~~ were, until now, extremely precarious. The coal mining states and the oil-digging states seemed prepared to vote for the high duties and might very well have been able to swing it with the rest of Congress, as they almost did in the matter of the Kerr Bill. It was no joke. It would have ruined Venezuela and had a frightful effect in the Near East, but they kept on claiming that the fuel oil from abroad was the downfall of the American coal miner, and the competition from foreign petroleum was stifling the life out of the domestic oil industry, high prices to the contrary notwithstanding- the oil people thought prices were capable of going higher, and the coal miners resented the way power companies shifted from coal to oil during strikes. The Venezuelans were scared stiff, and even went so far as to threaten what reprisals they had at their command should the bill pass. The Korean matter has probably squelched the movement to prevent the entry of foreign oil into the United States, and that's about all the good I can see in the situation. You can't say I haven't tried. Your friend Mr. ~~xxxx~~ is assistant to the Korean man at the Department, by the way, and is probably keeping busy these days. The Korean man himself is William's classmate Niles Bond, who was chairman of the Education Committee of which I was a member. Also by the way, I'm sorry to say that Senator Taft is acting queerer every month. I was the smallest bit displeased with his rather sub-rosa encouragement of McCarthy, but this latest example of his clear thinking in partisan politics has discouraged me a good bit more concerning the Senate's most intellectual member. I enclose a cartoon from the Post that puts the point more elegantly than words. As I have said before, he may be a son of William Howard Taft but he ain't no friend of mine.

My tri-mensual trial at the hands of Time magazine took place last week. You know I feel a compulsion to take that silly current events test they write up every three months, and it is that which forces me to read the Sports department every

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week much against my inclination. But the test is weighed in favor of faithful Time readers, and includes sporting events, so I have to read it willy nilly in order to pass this foolish test which some interior force majeure compels me to take. I have been doing better since I arrived in the United States and have been reading the Post daily, and my aim is to break a hundred at some future date. The goal is in sight, for my score this time was 98, against 93 three months ago. Time once announced that some jerk out in California claimed to have gotten 104 out of the 105 questions right, and while I don't believe it for a moment the poison has entered and is doing its dirty work in my mind. If I could just break a hundred I'd feel better situated to call the Californian a nasty examination cribber and faker. The same issue of time reported a letter from Galo Plaza of Ecuador (brother of our friend Gloria Moscoso) in which he said he too had the Time News Quiz bug, and had recently scored something like 70- that made me feel a little better, but not much. I may not have to worry about the president of Ecuador, but that feller in California is still around as the man to beat. If only Middleground hadn't out-raced Hill Prince at the Derby, I would have broken a hundred this time. The pity of it all! But it's not the first time the horse has let mankind down ungently, and at least I didn't have any money on it.

We were treated to another dinner de luxe last Friday night, at the home of a new member of the Colombian Embassy staff. He is an unusual man. His father made what is described as the "start" of a large fortune in soft drinks and the pharmaceutical line, and he himself spent most of his life up to fairly recently being educated in England. Cambridge, medical school, and then an internship in a London hospital. After which he went back to Colombia, became interested in local politics, and switched eventually to his country's foreign service. William respects him, but the Ambassador, Zuleta Angel, has been using him mainly as expert translator, it appears. They have another rather anglacised Colombian on their staff who has acted as translator, but William says that he has unlimited ability to translate and very little ability to understand what is being said, with the result that Zuleta now prefers the new man, Diego Garces. Zuleta was Colombian Foreign Minister until he came here, and apparently doesn't welcome suggestions from his staff. Zuleta is a monologist at all times, extremely interesting and intelligent, well-informed and sure of himself. It is a delight to listen to him expound- the first time, especially. He has a tendency to tell each joke three times in a row, for the benefit of anyone hiding under the sofa who didn't hear the first time. At this dinner, he told three times a story which I found extremely funny: an American newspaper man interviewing Galo Plaza of Ecuador once asked him a question which the president couldn't answer off hand. The newspaper man came back a few hours later for the answer, and Galo Plaza had to admit he didn't have it ready yet. "It's this way," the Americanized President explained, "Your president, when he wants to know the answer to a complicated question, rings a bell, tells his staff of experts to work on it, and gets the answer as quickly as twenty men working together can get it. The president of Ecuador, on the other hand, rings the bell and quickly

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discovers it's out of order." I like Sra. Zuleta, among other reasons because she always laughs heartily at my accounts of Laurence's latest sallies. She makes a startling contrast to the general run of Venezuelan ladies, since she is interested in many things, knows when to talk as well as when to keep silent, and has a few quiet jokes of her own to tell when the Ambassador is busy preparing for his next monologue. I'm afraid I'm harder on Sr. Zuleta than I really mean to be. He is kind, gentlemanly, and urbane, as well as alert. He has more to talk about legitimately than most people do, so it is easy to forgive his really interesting discourses, lengthy and one-sided though they may often be. William has been seeing a good deal lately in connection with some treaty preliminaries, and the Ambassador was kind enough to tell me that William conducts the series of meetings admirably, logically, and calmly. I was very proud to hear him say it, even if it was straight diplomat's talk. The dinner was excellent- vichysoise, bouchees a la reine filled with lobster, asparagus with sauce hollandaise, and a delicious angel cake topped with ice cream topped in turn with strawberries and melba sauce. Sr. Carces' father, I suppose, helped the affair a good deal by providing his son with the wherewithal for two butlers and an excellent cook. Every wish anticipated at the dinner table and in the drawing room. Ah, delicious luxury! Also present were a couple from the International Bank, American, the anglicized Colombian who used to translate, and Jose Camacho, who used to be at the Colombian Embassy but recently switched to the International Bank. ~~THE LAST NAME WAS BRITISH~~ Sr. Suarez, the anglicized Counselor, is so British looking and talking that he even seems to partake of some of the faults of the "comedy Englishmen" of the P.G. Woodhouse school. He married a lady whose name used to be Marshall Field, however, which was wise of him.

I thought the Times' book review man was a little unfair in regard to some points of dianetics, and it appeared to me he hadn't read the thing thoroughly enough, from some things he said and others he didn't say. However, I agree that Ron Hubbard has a lamentable habit of talking in grandiose, sweeping generalizations that can't fail to alienate non-readers of Astounding Stories. Hubbard alienated me by drawing some ridiculous conclusions about history which clearly indicated he hadn't read enough history to permit him to make up theories without making himself look silly and generally weakening his case. The whole book was the product of a Know-it-All, I'm afraid, and know-it-alls generally fail to distinguish between those subjects upon which they actually do know a great deal and the rest of the Encyclopedia Britanica. I wonder if the rest of the world has the same reaction to this sort of thing? When I spot an error on some by-path of an argument, it makes me search far more diligently for errors on the main theme. Therefore I wish Ron Hubbard had stuck to his knitting and not run on heedlessly into the wilds of Late Roman history where he apparently doesn't belong. Also I wish they wouldn't talk as if they were trying to sell the world an entirely new brand of Snake Oil. But they do seem to be getting places. Mrs. Rouse reports the book has finally been purchased by the library, at the request of the public. Virginia Davis and Elenid have gone up to Pendle Hill (the Quaker place of discussion) for a meeting to meditate, among other things, dianetics.

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William's vacation has to be put a little farther ahead, because of Rolly Atwood's vacation plans, and we probably won't set out for Flemington until the weekend of July 29 or so. Thus our original plans for arriving at your place ~~near~~ around the fourth of August or so need not be changed, unless you want them to be changed because of inconvenience to you. We hope, as I said, to gratify Laurence with a day in New York, and I'd love to know about how long it would take us to make a dash for our lives through Brooklyn and get out to your address., before Laurence's bedtime. I suppose we would stay at the Grosvenor. Do you think we ought to allow three hours, considering we will most certainly get lost at some occasion or occasions? Thus we might leave about four in the afternoon in order to arrive a little before seven. We must allow plenty of time for the big boy to see the incredible sights of the city, and ride as much as we can stand on the subway. He was cut to the quick to learn that double-decker buses, upon which he had been counting heavily, have been generally replaced by the single-story kind. But <sup>+</sup> count on the fascination of the tunnels and underground stations in the subway system to console him enormously.

I must go and wake him up, it's already four o'clock, and I am still rambling on.

I hope Putty isn't wearing her life away up there with the two girls.

Love to you all,