

June 11, 1951

Dear Pop,

Miss Roddy is with us, hanging up laundry number two for today, so here I am writing to you!

Life has looked up considerably since I made up my mind to sell that bond and turn over the proceeds to Miss R. More sleep, hence more pep, less nerves, more joie de vivre. At last I have time to give a thought to what things must be bought and where, and especially when, since I hadn't found a sitter I could trust with the girls in the daytime, when the shopping must be done. Now I can go to the dentist! Happily, I can sit and fondle the young ladies now and then. I can contemplate how nice it is going to be in Guatemala. I can maybe plan a small dinner or two before we leave. In short, the tremendous pressure is off. There is going to be a lot to do in connection with renting the house, also.

Mrs. Rowse got home yesterday from a short vacation during which she went out to Grinnell to see Teddy graduate. Last night she came over and said Teddy wanted to inspect the twins (much to my surprise, she said Teddy liked babies!) and so sure enough they both came over to keep an eye on the tea o'clock feeding. The girls were quite sleepy, and refused to smile at any of the standard jokes that wow them when they aren't sleepy. But what I wanted to tell you was that Mrs. Rowse had a couple of new Laurence stories I hadn't heard: It appears that before he left, L.J. paid a call on Mrs. Rowse, who congratulated him upon his new position as big brother. Laurence accepted the congratulations with proper pride, but when Mrs. R. said she had a book in the library called "Big Brother" which he might like to read now that he was one himself, he replied "The title doesn't interest me greatly." So Mrs. Rowse didn't press the matter. However, she did point out to him that he was the twins' big brother, just as Teddy was Laura Rowse's big brother. "You mean he's her enormous brother," Laurence remarked. Between March and June, Laurence has mastered the art of saying his r's correctly, and he is justifiably pleased with himself—almost as pleased as he is with his two new teeth, which have finally come in to replace the ones he lost last year.

Psychological blocks of huge proportions have hindered my mentioning the bank. It is in terrible condition, for neither of us has had a moment to spare for it. We hired a small colored boy for whenever he could come, and he came once, but hasn't returned as yet. The grass is beginning to look like that in the Great Plains before the white man came. Please don't ask me any more about it, for the whole matter is painful. The ivy we planted is doing well, under the grass. We put Vigoro on the whole bank last fall, as you remember.

I hope to have a visit from Aunty Piet the weekend of the twenty-fourth. Albert will sit for her. She says with defiant firmness that she is going to have a daughter in January.

Cousin Gertrude and Cousin Walter kindly came and sat for us last Thursday while we went to a reception for the new Colombian Ambassador. Cousin Gertrude said she was delighted to have a chance to play around with the twins, and I hope she meant it, but in any case I was most grateful, and the girls came through with a bang by

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smiling fullsomely and gurgling happily for the company. That time all the old jokes appealed to them both as humorous in the extreme, and they had their usual welcome for anyone with a bottle in his or her hand. Those young ladies are shamelessly willing to butter up anyone bearing milk. As a result, they are both plump and sassy. They weighed in at almost ten pounds last Friday at the doctor's. So far they have gone out of their way to prove that what Doctor Norton thought was enough milk for babies their age and weight was not enough as far as they were concerned, and I have had to step it up continuously far ahead of schedule. Even so, they drain each bottle avidly to the dregs, and seem to feel that we are barely satisfying the most urgent pangs. We gave up trying to break them of the two o'clock bottle because they told us each night for two weeks that they were still extremely hungry in the middle of the night. They won that argument hands down. It's easier to give it to them than argue several hours each night. Their hair is still the lovely brownish red it was, and Laura's eyes and hair still seem to be going to turn out a shade lighter than Helen's. We can tell them apart immediately with no difficulty, and so can Miss Roddy, but other people find it hard for the first half hour or so. Nonetheless, they are definitely quite a bit different, in spite of being "identical" twins, biologically speaking. They have different habits, too. Just for an example, Laura will always go right to sleep without crying unless she has a tummy ache, while Helen almost always rears up in her little crib like a turtle (they sleep on their tummies) and cries mournfully for attention. She feels sociable after meals, and is delighted to be picked up and held- smiling with rewarding ease and touching eagerness. Alas, we have very little time to indulge her love of company and pleasant chatter. Even when she is hungry Helen is so glad to be taken out of bed and fussed with that she will smile at a sufficiently good joke, but Laura waits until after she has imbibed sufficient milk before she will come forth with any of her smiles. As I remember, Laurence was considerably older before he smiled at all, and in fact he wasn't a sociable baby at all, really. I think Laura looks more like Laurence did than does Helen, but as I say, Laura is quite a smiler herself when circumstances justify good humor.

The loan has been negotiated, so we can finally get around to buying our equipment for the great move. It is really high time, for the packers will come on July 27, by which time everything must be ready to go. I hope everything won't gang up on us at the last moment. William is planning to take a week's leave at the end, and Miss Roddy will be here till we go, so I feel far more confident of being able to arrange things smoothly than I did two weeks ago.

The house we are going to live in has been lived in by the first Sec'y's of Embassy since 1939, it appears. That should mean that many little quirks have been ironed out, hooks put up where hooks are called for, bells installed where bells are needed, etc. There is a lot of Government furniture, which is very nice, but poses a problem as regards curtains, etc. Not knowing the color of the government rugs, I can't buy material for curtains, chair coverings, etc., till I see them. Material is out of the question down there, for all practical purposes. I shall just have to cross that bridge when I come to it. Luckily, there is a government furnished guest room and bath on the ground floor separate from the rest of the bedrooms. How nice for you and us! Also, there is a large enclosed

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garden with a child's room and bath off it, which will make it possible for them to have a lot of space to roam in without having to track in and out the house for trips to the john. As I said on the telephone when you so KINDLY called me, the place is apparently quite huge, but that again is another bridge I'll have to cross at the time. More furniture from the Embassy residence, which has recently been redecorated, should be available soon, we are told. I hope so, because we simply can't afford to furnish a barn. A friend of ours, Isabel de Garcia, saw the place a few weeks ago and said it is very nice indeed, but as I say, very large. She said a party for two hundred is quite possible-meaning well, of course, but sending cold shivers down my spine.

Laurence is terribly excited about the trip. At first he was unhappy for a moment about going by ship, because he pointed out he had already been on a ship, but never in an airplane. But when we told him that the ambassador had kindly offered to send the Air Attache's plane down to Puerto Barrios to pick us up, if possible, he was overjoyed and could settle down to asking about ships in peace. When we told him we should leave from New York, his cup overflowed. He has really become a wonderfully satisfying little boy, and very good indeed. He is much better at helping himself than formerly, and absence has made his heart grow fonder toward mamma. He was always saying, "You sweet little mamma, how I love you!", or "I won't let anyone hurt you, mamma- and I won't let anyone hurt our babies, either." Kisses and hugs were mine without asking, and of course I reciprocated with great enthusiasm.

At last you have a real letter. Today was set apart especially for writing to you. Much love to both of you, and tell me when you are leaving on your trip. Please don't stop writing to me just because I can't write as often as I should like.

Love,