

Monday, June 25, 1951
Bethesda

Dear Pop,

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Your letter asking me to write air mail not later than Monday arrived this very morning, so I thought perhaps I might still be able to get a letter to you.

We've had quite a time recently. My old friend Ted Bishop turned up one afternoon from Miami, full of his usual dry wit. I was so glad to see him! Also, Auntie Piet decided to come down for last weekend as a final fling, since she is having a daughter in January. They are very firm about the daughter. Piet is feeling pretty good, happily. She came by plane and we had a wonderful but far too short visit. They are living in the famous Levittown, and plan to buy a house there. Not perfect, but has its points and only costs \$9000. Also, we had the President of Ecuador. Great fun and great running around and great tempests in teapots and everybody coming through with a bang in the press, I'm happy to say. Editorials praising him, Wiley making a speech in favor of Galo Plaza in the senate, business firms paying for ads of welcome, absolutely perfect reception committee at airport, parade with thousands cheering, jets overhead, keys of city, placards on all lamposts saying viva and welcome depending on which side of the lampost, everyone in ARA satisfied that all went well, everyone exhausted when party finally pulled out for New York. Oh, and last but hardly least, Ex-Im Bank cautiously and sourly snarling that it may very well give thought to a loan-equivalent in their special language to yes indeedy. Galo Plaza popular everywhere because speaking absolutely flawless idiomatic English without a trace of accent, six foot one of vitality and good looks and no censorship of the press in Ecuador, etc. We got invited to several functions, most exalted of which was Sec'y Acheson's dinner in Plaza's honor. Senators a dime a dozen, Sec'y and wife most cordial, much hard work for us, wonderfully a propos after-dinner speech by Acheson- enough to convince me the man is hard to beat. Lobster Thermidor, steak two or three inches thick, indifferently bad vichyssoise, five kinds of wine, Marine band playing in musician's gallery of eighteenth century Bourbon-type palace. Yowee. I discussed Peter Rabbit with Mrs. H. Alexander Smith (R., N.J.) until pressed to serve as Spanish conversationalist with Mrs. Plaza by Mrs. Acheson. Felt my years of toil over the language justified by the moment when able to answer "I do" when Mrs. A. whispered for heaven's sake who speaks Spanish around here and can talk to Senora Plaza. Hadn't wished to desert Mrs. Smith or would have rushed over sooner. Left Peter Rabbit for discussion of latest trends in nino-care with Mrs. Plaza and other ladies. Find myself in a conversational gold-mine on account of being mother of twins. Ohs, Ahs, etc. Rep. Ricars of House Foreign Affairs committee being from South Carolina advocated straight diet of salt pork and hush puppies as best for rearing infants. I replied quick-like it must be good because look at the people of S. Carolina but perhaps might be best if I looked it up in the baby book first. (Laughter) Pleased myself by remembering various offices and titles of Ecuadoreans on President's staff, having been

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coached intensively on way over by William.

The girls are getting fat and sassy, weighed in at ten pounds last time we went to Dr. Norton's office. Are looking just as different from each other as before- i.e., quite alike at first glance, but actually fairly unlike when analyzed point by point. Hair still just nicely reddish, but Laura's definitely lighter than Helen's. Laura's eyes probably getting grey, Helen's brown. I don't care what the books say, the girls smile like crazy all the time now. Helen will say "angooo" when asked to say it, Laura will smile inevitably if you tell her "Oh what a beautiful girl you are!"- unless she's too hungry for flattery. I know it's not possible, but darn it she does. Maybe it's the tone of voice, but Miss Roddy, William and I have all tried it many times, and eight times out of ten or so Laura will smile ecstatically when you say it. So there. They are the cheerfulest little characters a mamma or nurse could hope for, gay and happy and rewarding. They're terribly grateful when picked up, and will repay kindnesses such as talcum powder on humid days by extremely flattering smiles, gurgles, and undivided attention. When talcum powder is applied to their little bottoms to the accompaniment of "choo-choo-choo-choo" and a circular motion of the hand, both of them dissolve in gratitude and smiles. Dr. Norton confirms the baby book that no baby smiles until he is at least three and a half months old. Nonsense. These children began at about six or seven weeks. Laurence never even came near a smile until he was more than four months old, so it's not just fervent parental feeling on our part. Besides, they won't do it unless they are happy. The book says babies occasionally appear to ~~be~~ smile when they have gas pain, but this is actually only an involuntary grimace. Could be. But these are real smiles, that only come when they aren't too sleepy, too hungry, or too full of air bubbles to be sociable. They have finally given up their two A.M. hottle, thank God. William can now sleep through the night, and I usually don't have to get up till six or near it. I'm so glad they didn't keep that up.

The packers are coming on or about the 25th, and we have to move out and go to Flemington. Then we must go into New York probably the first of August to get the car on the ship in time. That first lap as far as New York will be the hardest of the trip, I'm fairly certain. I have contracted for a nursemaid in Guatemala already- a wonderful girl here wrote to her sister down there who contacted a friend of the first wonderful girl's own nintera. The first wonderful girl and the second wonderful girl both know this Maria Antonia and say she is nice, reliable, well-known to both wonderful girls' families. I wrote to Maria Antonia, she wrote back saying she would be delighted to be nursemaid to "cuaches"- the local probably Indian word for twins- the regular word is mellizas. How wonderful to have a house and a nursemaid and a gardener and a maid all lined up already! All we need is a cook, but that won't be hard. We'll probably have to camp out for quite a while till our furniture arrives, but at least there's that gov't. furnished bedroom for us to sleep in and we can borrow the rest. It turns out that if the Air Attache can't bring us up to Guatemala city by plane the Embassy has a private railroad car with nice clean john, plenty of room, and even private bar. We won't suffer!

Must stop and post this before five. Love to both,