

Tuesday, June 26, 1951

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Dear Mamma,

Just been down shopping at the main Woodie's, then over to the "welfare section" where various manufacturers, etc. offer their products free of U.S. tax and sometimes at discount. We are getting our refrigerator and a studio couch through them. Also luggage without the 20% tax, which helps a lot. A Philco refrigerator with 11 sq. ft. capacity and three ice trays will cost us only 240.00 dollars including packing and shipping to Guatemala, which sounds pretty good. A Simmons studio couch with two pillows comes to \$55.20 plus packing and shipping. I had just seen the cheapest Woodies had to offer, and it was \$90.00 - Simmons ones were about \$120.00.

The house we are getting is as big as a barn a parently- the entrance hall is 25 by 16 feet with an L 16 feet by 20. Not having the money to buy enough furniture to make it look half-way furnished, I have bought a white shutter-like screen to try to hide some of the emptiness. There is a government sofa in it already, thank goodness. All in all, I've been having a time trying to find enough things to cover a few of the bald spots we are inevitably going to have- and furniture has gone up terribly since I last bought any. That's why I'm even more anxious than ever to get that nice semi-circular table. We figured out we should buy three more end tables, two more coffee tables, and two tables such as your semi-circular one. After seeing the prices, I bought two end tables and one coffee table only- we simply can't afford any more, and that's that. We are buying the things on time as it is, and I don't want to get further in debt than I now am. Not only do we have that enormous hall to furnish, but also a living room about twice as big as our present one, plus a small library about as large as our present dining room. But what we can't do we might as well not brood about. I had to buy one more wing chair (cheapest I could get) plus two upholstered side chairs. Fortunately I can get any fabric they have and that makes it cheaper. I can't tell what colors will go with the draperies and the rugs, so I am simply having to plan on recovering or slip-covering everything I get. I hope to find someone who will be able to do it for me down there, and some inexpensive native cloth. I hope I can, because everything I bought has horrible upholstery now. At least I'm able to take advantage of the situation and buy things marked down because of tears or stains or something like that. I bought a darlingly shaped little victorian love seat sort of like yours in the old "strawberry room" which was intended for use in bedrooms and is covered in blue satin with a large slit down the back. It was reduced from 90 dollars to \$50 for the tear in the back. Covered in some strong Guatemalan material in all white and with box pleats or something like that it should look less bedroommy and be usable in the library or living room. Being unable to afford another chest of drawers for the bedroom we'll use, I got some of those closet lingerie chests that are usually covered in chintz paper. I'll use them and William will use the chest of drawers. I find we can paint the walls but not the woodwork of the new house, but we'll just have to get used to dark woodwork. The living room has only two large windows, so perhaps I'll be able to use my own white curtains after all- the windows are much longer and higher than our present ones, but I could have the curtain material sewn together, or plyboard cornices made and covered.

We have been having quite a time what with the visit of the President of Ecuador, various farewell parties, and last weekend the visit of dear old Auntie Piet. They are buying one of the houses in Levittown. Plenty of disadvantages out there she says, but the houses themselves are quite nice, with Bendixes included, and only cost \$9000! She doesn't feel at all bad happily,

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in spite of the little GIRL who is arriving in January. We met her at the airport on Sat. and she had to go back Sunday at 4 P.M., but we managed to have nice relaxing talks just the same. She says she is an abject failure as a housekeeper and the place looks frightful all the time, which was what I sort of thought would be the case knowing Auntie Piet, but I tried to cheer her up by reminding her what a kind Christian deed it really was on her part to give her neighbors a chance to think they were superior. She said that was an angle she hadn't thought about yet, and on the whole she considered it so good she would no longer dream of reforming her housekeeping because it would be so cruel to the neighbors. She loved the twins properly and they rewarded her with big smiles and much "angoooo-ing".

We were invited to dine by an eager Sec'y of State and Mrs. Acheson, who of course could hardly wait to see us. Also among the guests were Senators Connally, Wiley, H. Alexander Smith, and others, plus Rep. Richards of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and some International Bank people and a lot of unidentified others. The dinner was in honor of President Galo Plaza and his party. I got to wear a brand new black tulle evening dress I had bought for Guatemala, and found to my surprise that Nancy Mann, who had recommended that I wear something like that when I asked her over the telephone what sort of thing to wear, had on exactly the same dress! It had a black tulle stole, however, and I wore my stole fixed like shoulder straps, sort of, and she wore hers like a scarf. The ladies all knew we had on the same dress, but when we went home I said to William "Wasn't that funny about Nancy and me!" and he asked what I was talking about, not having noticed anything beyond the fact that we both were wearing black! I did my duty all evening, talking Spanish like mad most of the time. I also talked for some time with Mrs. H.A. Smith, a pleasant elderly lady who is a fan of Beatrix Potter and lives in Princeton. Rep. Richards, who is from South Carolina, recommended that I feed the twins on salt pork and hush puppies so they'd grow big. Senator Wiley we were introduced to and talked with for a few minutes. He was, I'm sorry to say, loud-mouthed, platitudinous, and boastful, with the result that I felt slightly embarrassed when he talked to the Ecuadoreans. His daughter was with him, and she was quite different - a Radcliffe girl who showed the advantages of better up-bringing than her father. I'm glad I didn't like him personally, since I think his "policies" are even worse than his personality. While I was talking to Mrs. Smith Mrs. Acheson rushed over in a dignified way (she's a fine-looking woman, who looks as if the word "distinguished" had been coined to describe her personally) and asked us if either of us spoke Spanish and could sit beside Mrs. Galo Plaza. Since Mrs. Smith didn't, I was delegated to do the honors. All evening I found the twins a conversational gold mine, especially with the ladies, of course. At dinner I sat between an Ecuadorean Foreign Office man and another Ecuadorean who is their delegate to the United Nations and also Press Relations man for the Presidential party during the trip. We managed to have quite interesting conversations, which as I looked up and down the table I could see was not the case everywhere. Once more I was thankful for speaking fairly good Spanish. Also I was grateful to William for having given me a briefing on the names and titles of the various members of the Ecuadorean party, for that enabled me to introduce them without hitches and start the conversational balls rolling by bringing in each one's particular job, etc. In short, I felt that I had done my duty by the dear old Department. The dinner was held in Anderson House, on Massachusetts Avenue not far from Dupont Circle. The place is now the headquarters and museum of the Society of the Cincinnati, but was once a private mansion. The banquet hall or ball room where we had dinner was enormous, two stories high, with a musicians gallery, where a small orchestra from the Marine

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Band played. The table was shaped like a huge horseshoe, and the whole room was banked with roses. First course was a most indifferent cold vichysoise- I thought I could make it much better myself, and did so yesterday just to prove to myself I could- but the fish was very delicious lobster Thermidor. Then came some wonderful steak several inches thick (but only a small piece, of course) and then a salad. The dessert was vanilla ice cream with nesselrode sauce, set on plates ringed with crimson sugar for decoration. Sherry with the soup, white wine with the fish, red with the meat, and champagne with the dessert and toasts. After the various toasts to our President and to President Plaza, etc., Mr. Acheson made a very good after-dinner speech, brief, amusing and beautifully delivered. President Plaza (brother of our friend Gloria Moscoso) was born in the United States while his father was Ambassador here, and went to the University of California and to Maryland University, so he speaks absolutely perfect English. His speech was less brief and should have been a good deal less serious in tone for such an occasion, but wasn't bad at all. Gale Plaza's English is so completely natural that it makes a wonderful impression. He's a big handsome man six feet one and only about forty-five years old. William was very pleased at the way everything went during his stay here in Washington. The newspapers all had nice editorials about him, pictures and stories of his life (always including the story about how he had to sell apples in N.Y.C. for a while during the depression) and Congress listened to him at the Capitol. All the details were handled well and things got done on schedule. When William and the rest went to meet him at the airport the military and naval guards of honor marched perfectly, the jets overhead were in perfect formation, the 21 gun salute was quick and not too loud, the plane landed at precisely the moment it was supposed to. The motorcade went down Pennsylvania Avenue with the two presidents in the lead and thousands cheering, etc. Everyone who had anything to do with the matter in the Department was relieved, tired and happy when the party finally left Washington. William had been to three or four parties or functions that I didn't have to attend.

The packers are coming on or about the 25th of July, so we'll have to move out sooner than we had expected. On the other hand, we have to get the car on the ship sooner, too- by the first of August. So that means several days or a week are going to elapse between the time we have to leave 5208 Lenwood and the time we have to be in New York with the car. I haven't figured out how we'll manage it all yet.

I've been typing this at William's office while he finish up his work (quite a long process) but now he's ready and we must leave quickly, because Laura Rowse is at home sitting with the babies. I'm including a check for thirty dollars which I hope will cover at least some of the various items, including the typhoid shots.

Love to you all.