

Bethesda, July 19, 1951

Dear Janie et al.,

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The little silver rattle-bells came and have already been through two rigorous courses of mouthings and rattlings. The girls had never seen rattles before- for some reason no one had given us any and we hadn't bought anything beyond the strictly utilitarian uninteresting necessities such as diapers and shirts. They seem to enjoy lying on their backs and solemnly watching the flashes of silver light coming from their little hands. So far they seem more interested in the lights than the noises. It's nice to have the names on them, because although circumstances usually compel us to make their things interchangeable, every once in a while I start to brood about the exchanges of germs that go on. I hope maybe I'll find some CHEAP sewing woman in Guatemala who'll do a wonderful job on sewing names or at least initials on their dresses and so forth. The girls are just beginning to start to think about grasping things, and they do a pretty good job of holding on to the bells. When they drop out of their hands, Helen especially usually starts to complain until we come and give it back to her.

To finish up the story of the twins, they are getting less and less alike as they grow up. Helen looks to me a good deal like Barbara's baby pictures, and I'm keeping my fingers crossed hoping she'll continue to look at least somewhat like her beautiful little cousin. Her eyes are dark, her hair darker than Laura's. Laura looks more like Laurence did, and her eyes are light, bright blue now- just as his were before they turned to grey. But her hair is definitely reddish. Helen's has reddish lights, but is more brown. In spite of all this, the two girls are very much alike in most of their features, and it takes strangers a moment or two to notice their differences. They are both such pleasant, cheerful babies! It's a great deal more rewarding to take care of them than it was the solemn, serious little Laurence. He didn't smile at all till he was three or four months old, and then only very rarely. The girls started smiling so young that I didn't believe they were real smiles until a few weeks later. It was when they were six or seven weeks old, and I was so convinced that babies didn't smile til much later that I kept saying "It's just gas on the stomach!" until it became so obvious that it was no such thing that I was happily forced to stop believing what the baby book said on the subject. They are very talkative, too, expressing themselves in easily understandable goos and ahhs that manage to convey by tones whether the baby feels pleased, annoyed, impatient, surprised, or whatever. Laurence either cried or was silently contemplative until he was much older. While they will talk a good deal to us, they really don't hit their stride till they get together where they can see each other. It's simply wonderful to see them lying on the big double bed looking at each other. Their eyes light up, they smile positively tenderly, give exultant cries of delight, and lately they have begun to talk to each other almost continuously. Sometimes one will listen to what the other is "saying", sometimes they will both start "angooing" at once, as if they had so much to tell each other they couldn't wait a minute. They have begun trying to reach each other's hands, and nothing amuses them more than to hear the other baby sneeze, or cough, or watch her yawn. After a particularly funny sneeze,

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both babies will chortle with delight. Obviously, while they like us grownups very much, especially when we bring milk or banana, the best and most interesting characters in their little world are themselves. If you have to be a Foreign Service child, I can't imagine anything better than to be one of a pair of F.S. twins so you'll always have your friend and playmate with you wherever you go. Poor little Laurence, who is naturally of a lone wolf nature anyway, will have the matter further complicated by life in the Foreign Service. Like William, he really only enjoys playing with one or two old established friends, and other children in greater quantities put him off completely. By the way, he's showing more and more interest in things scientific, which pleases us enormously. He and my brother John get together down in John's basement electronics laboratory for hours at a time while John explains what he's doing to a solemnly fascinated audience of one. He's been up in Flemington with grandmother practically all spring and summer, feeding the chickens, allowing the two dogs to follow him around the farm adoringly, making grandmother read to him several hours a day, and generally rather enjoying the position of absolute monarch of all he surveys. I think this is better than having him here, where we would of necessity have to forego giving him the attention he is used to getting as an only child. This way, we will have him alone and without help only on the ship for a week or so, since in Guatemala we'll have a nursemaid, cook, etc. to give me more chances to devote myself to him. I hope it's better, anyway, because it would have been necessary in any case. You can't take care of twin babies and make preparations for a three-year-or-so expedition all at the same time, I discovered. I had to sell a bond I'd been saving since Lagos to buy a fur jacket with, in order to re-hire the practical nurse so I'd have time to make preparations and sleep a couple more hours a day. Luckily I was able to buy a second hand black fur jacket for \$28! The lady said it was black ermine. You heard what the lady said, didn't you? It's going to be black ermine at all the most important diplomatic-functions in Guatemala, and it's going to forget its sordid past in a Georgetown Next-to-New shoppe as it starts a clean, new life abroad. I really couldn't be more pleased, because it's just the cut I wanted to go over full skirts. It's very short, bolero-fashion, and has elbow-length sleeves. Should be just right.

We've been (or rather I've been, since William hasn't time to spare for that sort of thing) trying like crazy to try to get a few extra pieces of furniture for the place down in Guatemala that we're going to rent. I've got a plan of it, and while it looks simply wonderful, it's a great deal bigger than our present house, and our furniture is going to have to be spaced around like the hairs on a bald man's head. For some reason they put in a great big L-shaped hall, 25½ by 16½ by 20½. For a hall, we have exactly one whatnot and one small mirror. I bought a screen to hide some of the emptiness in one of the corners, and a large coffee table in the shape of a hunt table to put in front of a thank-goodness government-supplied sofa shown on the plan of the house. Mother has donated a largish half moon side table and a large mirror. Someone suggested huge Ali-Baba type jars with elephant ear plants in them, but beyond that I guess I'll have to furnish it with magnificent distances. The living room is almost twice as big as ours, and there's a library as big as our dining room. Oh well, there's nothing like spaciousness, is there?

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We floated a loan to be able to leave town a step ahead of the sheriff, by refinancing the house. That's nice, because now we will be able to rent it instead of selling it down the river. I had always dreaded the thought of having to sell the only house we can really call our own (ignoring the senior partner, the Northwestern Mortgage and Trust Co.) and which Laurence will naturally look back on as the old homestead. Also we didn't want to sell it just any time we happened to be leaving, because of the fact that the new National Institutes of Health are going up rapidly about three blocks away from us and will be employing about five thousand people by the end of 1952. Obviously if we want to sell it at all, we should wait till around five thousand people are clamoring for housing in this very area. We didn't think we'd have any trouble renting the place, and we certainly didn't. First people who came to see it took it, and that was that. He seemed a nice young man, and had been to Swarthmore, which of course influenced me in his favor. He and his wife have only a nine-week-old baby, which was something of an anti-climax since we had instructed the real estate agent to tell all and sundry that contrary to usual practice we WELCOMED people with children.

Your daddy came last Sunday morning by plane and stayed till Monday evening. Sarah threatened to come, but couldn't at the last minute because of some trouble she's having with her eyes. We had a fine, quiet, relaxing visit, doing very little beyond going out to Buckeystown with the twins. Your daddy and William sat out on the porch most of the time talking happily. I got a chance to tell your pop how well William has been doing in Washington, and what very nice things I've heard from his boss and colleagues in the Department about his work. Naturally William didn't say a thing about it, so I was able to see daddy's face light up and hear him say in deceptively modest tones that he had always known it was just a question of time before everyone realized how good William is. He was so thunderously tender with the girls, and so careful to remember to praise my food, that it all near broke my heart. I'm so glad the visit worked out so very well, and only sorry he didn't come sooner and oftener.

I'm writing so much because I haven't been able to before and probably won't be able to again for months and months. Ditto William, needless to say. We're going to leave Bethesda on the 30th of July, go to Lexington for two days, and then up to New York with the car and twins. Thank God Miss Roddy the practical nurse will be up in New York also, visiting an aunt but willing to oblige until we get on the ship. It's a United Fruit boat, and we'll be on it around six days along with aprox. 1100 paper diapers and two good hanks of plastic clothes line, to be wound around the ceiling of the cabin. When we land at Puerto Barrios we have our choice of eleven hours on an Army surplus (Either Union or Confederate, I don't know which) train or we hope a ride on the Air Attache's plane if he's nice enough to come down from Guatemala City to get us. I've contracted for a nursemaid to be ready when we arrive, and a maid is staying on in the house from the previous regime- this house has been rented by the American Ist Sec'ys. since 1939, it appears- but from then on we'll have to camp out till the furniture arrives a month or so later. When it arrives, I can start having curtains made and slipcovers for the extra chairs I had to buy. End of paper, so end of letter, I guess. Many thanks for rattles!

Love to all,