

Jan. 3, 1950

Bethesda

Dear Pop and Helen,

It is the first day of Laurence's return to the "office", and although he will be coming home in a few minutes, I may be able to get a little of this letter written before he comes back. He explained sadly to his two animals that he wouldn't be able to take them for rides this morning, as he usually did during his vacation, and that they would have to amuse themselves quietly during his absence. I told him his Abuelito Campbell is an electrical engineer in order to impress ~~xxxx~~ him, and he was suitably impressed, although I know perfectly well he hopes you drive a electric train, so in a way I suppose it's cheating slightly. But since he has been an electric train himself for some days now, I couldn't resist the temptation. He asked me if you were a diesel engineer also, but I told him I wasn't sure. When he is an electric engine, he eats nothing but electric current, and when he is a diesel he will have nothing but diesel fuel at his meals. He wrote you the enclosed letter on New Year's Day, and then, as I have noted, he had qualms about its contents.

I plan to be a very busy woman for the next few weeks: my first problem is going to be getting the boy in public school next fall. Montgomery County says they may not enter kindergarten ~~xxxx~~ unless they are five years old on or before the 30th of November. Mrs. Rowse tells me that she had a friend whose daughter was in the same class as L.J., i.e., five a few days after the deadline. The mother thought the child was ready for school, said so to the appropriate authorities, and the authorities sent round a sort of inspector, who stayed with the child for an hour and a half, and emerged with the report that the child was indeed ready for kindergarten, and an exception was made in her case. I want to do the same thing with L.J., and I plan to present the following arguments to back up my case: 1) We are in the Foreign Service, and this may be the last chance L.J. will have of going to an American public School. We want him to have as much public school in the U.S. as he can possibly have for that reason. "e may be transferred sometime in 1950¹ or 1951², and thereby lose our chance to send him. It is important for F.S. children to get a grounding in American ways while they are young and impressionable. 2) although he will be younger than most of the children who enter next fall, F.S. life is so changeable that by the time he is in the eighth grade or so he will probably have lost considerable school time due to having to leave posts in the middle of the school year, and therefore will undoubtedly not end up his academic career any younger than the rest of his class. 3) he has been to nursery school for a year, and will not find school life such an abrupt contrast as some older children will who haven't been to school at all on entering kindergarten. 4) I want to have his Intelligent Quotient made, by some child psychologist whose methods are approved by Montgomery County and whose word the school authorities here will take. I want this done not only in order to flash it at the inspector (since I am serenely sure L.J. will come out very well) but also for my own information. If, as I am confident, he has a high I.Q., it should influence their discision somewhat, although I imagine his emotional maturity would be just as big a question. If they are making any exceptions at all, I hope they will in his case.

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Another feature of the near future will be a short, very short 18m afraid, visit from Grandpa Krieg, who has announced he may come to see us for a few days before William leaves. We had a letter from Janie who mentioned that he had written her saying he planned to come here "in January". I hope he will come in January for various reasons: 1) because I should like to do some intensive spring cleaning in February, 2) because I should like him to come before you arrive. Although it would be nice if you could meet him, I think he could be given a better welcoming "treatment" if he were the only visitor at the time. Although he is really a very sweet and sentimental man, he doesn't know how to act with small children, and in fact he scared L.J. half to death in 1948 when we visited Newark. I don't think Laurence will be as easily scared this time, and what's more he will be on his own home grounds this time, but you never can tell. In any case, for Grandpa Krieg's own sake I think it would be better if he were here first, and before you come, so L.J. and the rest of us can devote our entire attention to him. I'm afraid that if you and Grandpa Krieg were to approach L.J. simultaneously, poor Grandpa Krieg would be put in the shade by your notoriously successful personality. Naturally I can't tell Grandpa Krieg that, nor can I mention that I have spring cleaning to do (which might make him feel he wasn't as welcome as he really is) so the problem will be assuring him that while we are anxious for him to come at any time he is able, we would prefer January. The problem is further complicated by our desire that Sarah (his wife) not come, and the difficulty of communicating with Grandpa Krieg without hurting Sarah's feelings, which are of the type to be struck mortal blows by feathers. I think we will solve the problem best by having William call him on the telephone some time when he is working in the store, and ask him when we may start preparing the fatted calf. I don't actually think Sarah has any idea of coming herself because she teaches school now, but we couldn't write and beg Grandpa Krieg to come without asking her to come also. A very delicate situation. I'm sorry to say that Sarah is a most antipatica person indeed, and that is one of the reasons we want to give Grandpa Krieg the best possible time while he is here- he has a hard time of it at home.

We had the Kuhlmanns and the Manns over on Friday before New Year's Eve. Thane's mother is down from Michigan to help out, and she came also. I thought the poor things were probably due for a little time out from their awful worries over little Kay Anna's polio, and since she has been in the hospital for several weeks now, they can only sit at home and brood about it without being able to help her in the least. Mrs. Kuhlmann Sr. is a cheerful person, and I could tell her coming had made things a little brighter for Alice and especially for their little boy (aged three) who did not get polio at all. In any case, the Manns came also to help us cheer up the Kuhlmanns. They were happy in a way, because the doctors say Kay Anna is doing beautifully and will not be at all crippled. But she will have to stay in the hospital for two or three more months for treatments, nonetheless. They can only see her twice a week. They had just learned, to their great relief, that the polio foundation will pay all doctor and hospital bills. For a young couple on a smallish salary, that was the best possible news after Kay Anna's recovery.

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As planned, we spent New Year's Eve with Jane Dawson. L.J. had to come along because at the last minute my sitter decided to go out for the evening herself. He was delighted, however, and behaved excellently, going right to sleep in Jane's bed (along with Whitey, Brownie, and the sucking cloth). I brought along the ham I had baked for the Kuhlmanns, and we had a feast about midnight. The Mills kindly came also, although they had feared their twins* wouldn't have dates and therefore that they would be unable to go out themselves. The Mills are two fine people, solidly good to the core, for whom enough praise positively can't be uttered. We talked and talked, just as we used to do in the old days, and after the Mills went home we talked and talked some more. Jane is lonely, naturally, and misses having grown-ups to talk to. But she is an independent character, and doesn't want anyone to feel sorry for her. In spite of her general cheerfulness, however, it's hard not to feel sorry for her situation, at least. She is fierce in Allan's defense, as she should be. I hope she will soon feel able to go to parties without inhibitions, because as I say she is lonely, and fundamentally a sociable person. Going out would do her a world of good. But she is also somewhat conventional, and wouldn't think of going to a real party yet.

Dear father, I have a plan for making your stay in Washington not only ornamental, but also useful. I hope you will not think it is an overly ambitious scheme, and that you will be kind enough to give the matter some consideration before you arrive here: it is that you should teach me how to drive! I have been anxious to learn ever since I returned to the U.S., but after looking into the available driving schools, I find that there are none within reasonable distance. My thought was that you could do one of two things, if you care to, or none if you don't like either of the alternatives. You could either drive me over to Silver Spring where there is a professional driving school, or else teach me yourself. As it now is, I can't see how I shall ever be able to learn. It is somehow more important to know how to drive in the U.S. than it was either in Caracas or Lagos. I'll soon be so old and set in my ways I'll be unable to learn, so carpe diem is the motto of the day. You can think about it anyway, and tell me what you think when you arrive.

If you haven't already done so, please tell me as soon as possible when you want to have a house or apartment ready for you in this area. It now appears that the Alban Towers, where Jane Dawson and her mother and father stayed when they first arrived costs nine dollars a day for nothing very spectacular, and it occurs to me that I might put an ad in the Post asking for a furnished house or apartment in this neighborhood for the months of March and April and May (there again you'll have to tell me). You could get much nearer here if you managed to get a small furnished house, because there are no apartments near here. Also, you would have more chance of getting one for three months than for two months. Also we would be pleased the longer you could stay. In any case, I should like to do something about it as soon as possible, so please send the word posthaste. I'd guess that a nice, very nice, small house furnished would rent for two hundred a month, versus at least two hundred and seventy for two rooms scantily furnished at the Alban Towers. However, I don't know if we could get one, of course. Love,