

April 17, 1950
5208 Glenwood Road, Bethesda

Dear Piet and Albert,

We were very, very happy to get your letter, especially since we had begun to think you were lost to us forever, this time. The young woman at the end of the Socony line in Caracas only told William that "Sr. Caan ha quitado la compania definitiva-mente." But gracious me, Calgary! Had it been Cairo, I would have been much less surprised. We were also much cheered to learn that you are both much happier about things and jobs and places. Nancy Mann told me that she thought you were more on the miserable side when she left Caracas, and that she had done a little worrying about you. With the result that I was pleased as could be to hear that you are doing great things for Socony Vacuum and yourselves, with only the minor matter of intense dislikes in the family to annoy you. I do, I do indeed know what you mean, Piet, about not getting on with your children! For a while last spring I thought Laurence and I would probably end by never speaking to each other our entire lives. Nursery school had the advantage of making me more tolerant of him during the shorter periods I had to deal with him, and of persuading him that Home and Mother weren't so detestable as he had originally believed. Now he hates school and loves me, so we are getting along just fine.

Pop finally got back from Europe, and is currently stationed for three months in a nice little house in Georgetown, with a brand new light blue Buick, which is not his type but the only one he could get after waiting more than a month. He coined a fortune in Germany and Spain, most of which went into income tax or blocked pesetas but a large part of which he was able to spend on three separate and distinct Grand Tours just about everywhere this side of the Iron Curtain. He ended up touring through Morocco or however you spell it visiting such spots as Casablanca, Tangiers, and Marrakesh. They absolutely and completely loved North Africa and drool every time they talk about it, especially Marakesh. They came back a bit sooner than they would have liked because my brother is riding a new hobby horse and about to be divorced by his wife all at the same time, with the result that his two little girls are sort of sitting in the middle of a family situation plus something called dianetics. Dianetics is the new hobby horse, and John is convinced that given a chance it will revolutionize the mind of man. I suppose I've spelled it wrong, but it boils down to speeded-up psycho-analysis by means of hypnosis, along with speeded-up techniques of "clearing" the mind of strange trauma which may be wandering around the subconscious. In any case, John is both administering and being administered to, with the result that in spite of everything he is as calm and even cocky as you please. He is also, I'm happy to say, doing beautifully in a financial way. Books, radio, and television in addition to his regular job. But all that doesn't leave much time for the poor children, whose mamma is currently in the Virgin Islands, and apparently pains to leave the children with John permanently- John and a hired woman by the week. We had his older daughter here during her Spring Vacation, and my mother had the smaller girl at the farm at the same time.

During the month that William was away on his magnificent trip through five South American countries I sat, just as happy

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as could be, of course, and acquired perspective and patience. The less said about it the better, but I will go so far as to divulge that it was every bit as bad as I had anticipated. Since then things have picked up enormously, and Pop and Helen's being here has created a necessity for many happy parties and excursions. Right now they are up in New York, havin' taken Peedee back to her home and school, and are now looking for a place on Long Island for the summer. Pop thinks he may retire to Florida after all, though he always said he wouldn't. He is an incomparable baby-sitter, and has given me a great deal more "days out" than I have had since we arrived in the U.S. Laurence is his admiring slave, as are most children. By the way, Laurence told us on his fourth birthday, "Mamma and Daddy, from now on you must call me just Laurence, and not Laurence John- that's too babyish." So we are obeying his instructions. He is proud as can be, because he has already lost one of his baby teeth and is about to lose another. I was worried at first, but the dentist quieted my fears and told me that since he had teethed early as a baby, he was merely keeping up the original hectic pace. The older children in the neighborhood resent his encroachment on their grown-up privileges, but respect him for it nonetheless. He wrote a note to the fairies, and received a dime, as is the local custom. I must tell you that we owe you a great deal for having written, last year, about Billy's "malnutrition". I told Laurence about it, attributing it entirely to a refusal to eat green vegetables, and we have been fighting a daily battle since then to stave off the horrors of malnutrition. So has the entire neighborhood, and our little cousins from Texas. "Eat youah beans Laurie, " said little Barbara to her younger brother last summer, "Gotta stave off that oooold Mal!" and one of the children even went so far as to eat his entire acorn squash, skin, stem and all, in a last-ditch endeavor to prevent galloping malnutrition! It works like a charm with Laurence, who has only to be reminded of the fate in store for little boys who don't take in two green vegetables a day, in order to produce a startling effect on the peas, broccoli, etc. on his plate. The little cousins from Texas stayed two weeks with us, and each day at lunch I was called upon to recite once more the fascinating but horrible tale of Billy Caan, and how he finally learned the Importance of Green Vegetables, When it was Almost Too Late. I hope you won't mind my having distorted the story, added details here and there, and finally ended with the punch line: "So now all poor Billy can eat is green vegetables and lettuce all day for the rest of his life. No cookies, ever. No dessert. No potatoes. and NO candy!" It's been a great help for me and Janie.

William is happy too, right now, because he just got a lovely Foreign Service promotion, an event that comes rarely. As a result of that he will also get a raise in salary from the Department of State, which works on the nasty principle that to him who has it shall be given. I may add that if he hadn't gotten a raise we would have been in a frightful pickle, because we have been going deeper and deeper in the red since we came to the US. We still have no particular prospects of leaving for the field within the next year, although events move fast when they finally move. I hope we can hold out here in Bethesda until the new National Health Center is completed, because it is more or less in our front yard, will employ about 5000 people, and will serve to raise the value of our house, so we won't lose the same amount we anticipated on the deal when we finally go.

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Likewise, it would be nice indeed if we could stay long enough to see you in New York. In addition, it would be lovely if we could remain for another school year, so that we could get our money's worth of kindergarten here for all the taxes we've been paying. That damned nursery school is expensive and has finished the job of nearly bankrupting us. Laurence will be ten days too young for kindergarten this September, but I've talked to the Man, and the Man seemed to be melted near to tears by the recital of all the woes a Foreign Service mother has- with the result that he is coming to the house late in the summer to interview Laurence and see whether they can make an exception in his case. With that nursery school off our necks and the raise in our pockets we might yet be able to buy daddy a new overcoat to replace the one with the hole in the tail.

I'm insufferably proud to report that I have written two articles for the Foreign Service Journal, one of which has already been published and for which I received the huge sum of twenty gorgeous greenbacks. The other one is coming up, and I've already thought of seven vitally important ways to spend the money. Having seen my Name in Print, I'm rather anxious to move on to large and well-paying fields, but it takes me so much time to do the things that I don't know if I'll ever have so much to spare again. But it was an enormous thrill.

Well, my dears, it's time for me to get to work around the house. Once more thank you very, very much for the letter. I hope you'll tell me when you are in New York, so I can plan ahead and come to see you- or vice versa.

When you write, give my affectionate regards to your excellent mamma.

Love,