

Sunday July 8, 1951

Dear Mamma,

When you called this morning I had been planning to write to you today and tell you the latest news and tentative plans. We had been thinking that John and Peg would be here this morning, but they thought they had better start back right after breakfast since the older children were sitting with the younger ones. I'd had Miss Roddy come, so I thought I'd have time for a letter, and so I do. It's a perfectly lovely summer day, not too terribly hot and a clear blue sky, so William and I thought we would take advantage of the unusual situation (Miss Roddy here of a Sunday, usually her day off) to do what we have been hoping to do for the three years we've been in Bethesda- have lunch at the Olney Inn. As William says, what's a few more dollars when we owe so much already?

We engaged a local real estate agency to be our rental agent last Saturday, but told him not to bring anyone to see the house until after the fourth of July, when we had a man come to clean up the bank which we have been unable to care for at all this spring and summer. We also finished the lawn and flower beds, cleaned out the play area, swept the terrace, spaded beside the garage, etc., to make the place look nice. I washed the garage door in my bathing suit! We looked very nice. Yesterday morning around eleven the agent brought the first "prospect" to see the place, and two hours later the prospect called and said he wanted to rent. He will pay a hundred and sixty a month, but the first year only a hundred and forty. Thus we are allowing him two hundred and forty dollars for repainting woodwork, walls, and outside trim. If he spends more than that, he pays for it himself. Each month of the first year we are letting him pay twenty dollars less than the rent, for redecorating purposes. His name is Belknap, he is an advertising man for a pharmaceutical firm, comes from central Pennsylvania, went to the U. of P., and to Swarthmore for a year during the war under the Navy's educational program. He and his wife have a nine-week-old baby boy. They have just taken this job in Washington and want to move in more or less right after the first of August. We didn't anticipate any trouble renting the house, but neither did we expect the first person who looked at the house to take it. We thought we had better establish the principle of a hundred and sixty a month because once a rent is registered with the rent control board it is practically impossible to raise it later, and since we will be gone for an unknown length of time it seems better to start off high in case rents rise in the next few years. It's fine to have the renting business off our minds so quickly. The lease is on a yearly basis, automatically renewed each year unless one party or the other gives thirty days notice.

As I said on the telephone, the Security Storage people may be willing to put off the packing until the 30th of July, which is a Monday. I hope so, for that will give us more time to pack up our own things into suitcases and trunks, and fewer days away from the diaper service, laundermat, etc. Also I'd rather take the trip up north on a Monday than a Friday or even Thursday, because the traffic is so much better Mondays. I certainly hope we will

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find that it's possible to rent a small baggage trailer for a one-way trip to New York not too expensively, but it may well be that the renter would have no way of getting the trailer back from New York or it might be too expensive. We have to take both baby beds of course, so the car will be terribly crowded in any case. If no trailer is possible, we will have to pack a great many suitcases in advance and send them up to the ship by Railway Express.

If the Security Storage can hold off till the 30th, we will leave that very day for Flemington, spend the nights of the thirtieth and thirty-first with you, and go up to New York with the car and babies on the first of August. If there is still an automatic laundry place in Flemington I don't see why we couldn't take the accumulated baby clothes down there to be washed on the 31st. If not, we can wait till we get to New York and do them there. If we can get the same type of rooms we had when we stayed at the Fifth Avenue Hotel last July with Laurence, it would be fine. We had two rooms and a little kitchenette with stove and ice box. That would be perfect for Miss Roddy to make the formula in, and we would certainly need two bedrooms with Laurence and the twins! Miss Roddy would stay with her aunt. Even if Security storage comes on the 27th, we would still do the same thing, and hope there is still a laundry place down in Flemington. We will be running on throw-away paper diapers in any case, and I will have with me a length of clothes line for the hotel and the ship!

I have the buying fairly well in hand, with only a few more major items and a dozen or so minor items still outstanding. I must go down town as soon as possible to take care of them. The dentist is going to take up a good deal more of my

time, alas. I've been having quite a series of sessions, and he's still found some more. Next weekend we expect a visit from William's father and stepmother.

I've had a wonderful stroke of luck! A friend recommended a second hand place down in Georgetown where people bring clothes and nicknacks they no longer want, and there I found a little black fur jacket, bolero type with elbow-length sleeves for only \$26! I would have preferred long sleeves, but the style is just exactly what I was hoping to find. The woman said it was black ermine, and by golly black ermine it's going to be whether or no! It will be just the thing to go over evening dresses with full skirts. With long-sleeved dresses I'll have to stick to my spring coat of course, but this solves the main problem: an evening wrap.

In addition to all our other business, we've been having a rush of social activity. July 5 was Venezuelan Independence Day, and yesterday we had to leave John and Peg here while we went for a few hours over to the Mann's. The former Italian Ambassador in Venezuela, Count Secco-Suardo, was in town with his wife. We always liked him very much and he was nice to us when William's position wasn't as important as it may become. So we were delighted to hear that he was going to call at the Mann's, and also that he is now Italian Minister to Guatemala! I don't know whether I told you that our old Caracas friends Bea and George Ansell (we rented their house down there for two months when we first arrived)

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are also down in Guatemala now- he's with the Bank of London and South America. She wrote and said their house is only a block or so away from the one we're going to rent. It will be nice to know someone right away who can perhaps help me out over the first hurdles.

It occurs to me that you might plan, if you want to, to come up by train with Laurence around noon or so on the second of August. If you could, we would write for a reservation for a hotel room which you and he might occupy together, so that the twins could yowl it out by themselves in the other room of our combination. We could have done a few of the necessary things that morning, and Miss Roddy would be there to stay with the twins in the hotel room. So you and Laurence and I if there is no pressing business could wander around New York doing whatever we had to- on those wonderful Subways!! I know Laurence would simply love the idea. If that plan is all right with you, let me know as soon as possible and I'll write for a room with twin beds for you and him on the second. Aunty Piet said she would just love to come and help out or just say goodbye, if she could find a sitter. They are hard to come by in Levittown, where all the families are young and all have young children. But it would be nice if she could, and you could meet her.

John and Peg seemed very happy indeed, and I must say I thought Peg was just fine. They left about ten last night, after supper, to go over and call on Susan, who was going to come to dinner but came down with a cold a few days before and couldn't go out. We couldn't go with them, because Miss Roddy had left at six as usual. John called me this morning before they left for home and said he had liked Tom Douglas very much, just as I thought he would. He commented as we had that Susan had picked a man as much like Sam as possible! In talking with John, I was interested to see how far he had come since last summer in his thinking.

I must stop now and write to William's old Aunt Ella, who's been ailing. Such a nice old lady- former schoolteacher, now living in Buckeystown, Md. I wish we had time to go out and show her the twins. First in the family, she said in a letter yesterday.

Love,