

IT WAS THE LATE EVENING of April 12, 1950, and I was only half awake when I saw the dim figure of the nurse walk into my room. She had a small bundle in her arms. I woke up quickly when she leaned over and showed me my infant son for the very first time. Twelve hours before — at exactly 10 A.M. — my son David Bruce Cassidy had been born at Flower Fifth Avenue Hospital in New York City. Like any mother, I was excited, curious and deeply awed by the experience of holding my child in my arms for the very first time.

"You may keep him for five minutes," the nurse said, and slipped away.

I opened the blankets and peeked at David's face — and he looked at me with the biggest, bluest eyes I had ever seen in my whole life. From that moment, I knew that David was a sweet baby — not a crier. He had a pleasant, almost smiling look on his face. His complexion was lovely, what I call "ivory and peaches". He was perfect and beautiful. He looked like a classical drawing of a cherub.

But David had red hair! For a split second, I thought, *I wonder if this is my baby?* (Later, the doctor told me that every mother has that thought right after her baby is born.) Then I remembered that my husband's (Jack Cassidy) mother had told me that Jack had been born with red hair and that *all* the babies on his side of the family started their life with "carrot tops".

David smiled up at me and I smiled back. I put my finger down and one of his perfect little hands wrapped around it. I opened the blanket a bit, and for some odd reason I counted all of his toes. (The doctor told me later that all mothers do *that* too.) And, yep — they were all there!

To this day, I'll never forget that first tranquil, lovely five minutes I spent with my beloved son. I guess you could say that a kind of bond arose between us then. And somehow, in my heart, I knew that no matter what the future brought, how close together or how far apart we might be, we would be held

forever in the deep "bond" I was feeling in that precious moment.

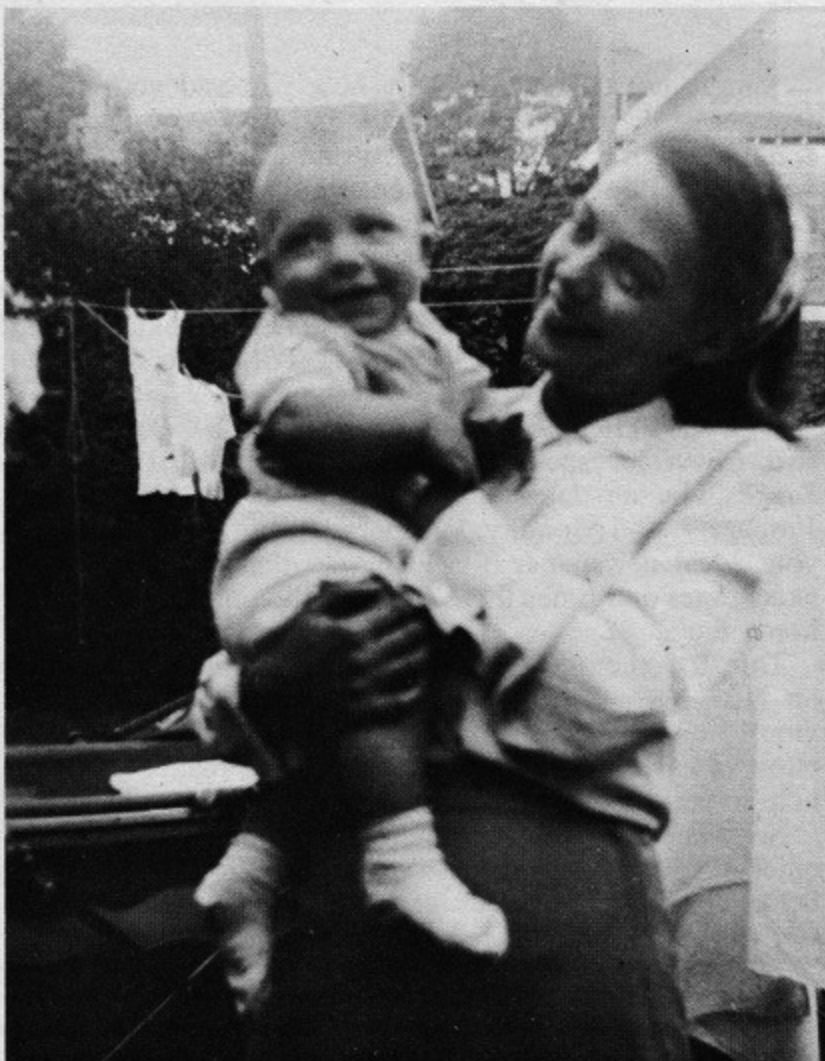
"SPOILED" FROM THE BEGINNING

During the ten days I stayed in Flower Fifth Avenue Hospital, the nurses spoiled my son. You see, David was the only *boy* born there during that ten-day stay — and though the nurses adored all of the baby girls, they naturally lavished a lot of affection and attention on the only boy on the floor. (By the way, David was a big baby and weighed eight pounds at birth.)

My husband, actor-singer Jack Cassidy, was away on tour at the time David was born. Jack and I had married at a fairly young age and though we both were professionals (I was and still am an actress), those were lean years and we welcomed any job that came along — even though, in this case, it meant that Jack would have to be away at the time his son was born. But we had already chosen "David" as our baby's name — somehow we knew our child was going to be a boy. Jack named him David because that was one of *his* favorite names, and I named him Bruce because that was one of *my* favorite names. However, we called him David from the very beginning. (In those early days I *wanted* to call him Bruce, but now I'm glad that I was overruled — for I think that "David" suits him perfectly. Don't you?)

Right after David was born, Jack and I decided to move into my folks' large house in West Orange, New Jersey. It wasn't just an "economy" move — though living with my folks *did* help us financially. One of the reasons we moved in with the Wards was that my mom and dad so very much wanted a son — even if it was just for a little while. You see, in our family there had been nothing but girls. In fact, Mom and Dad had

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David was a fat baby — as you can see in this picture of him at five months, proudly held by his mom Evelyn.



This photo, taken the same day, shows David with his beloved Grandma Ethel, who passed away in 1968.