

## THE STORY OF MY LIFE—CONTINUED

lot. I mean, I understood that an actor's life isn't as easy as it sometimes might look, and I knew that he had to work where he could find it—and from time to time, that meant tours. So I didn't get nervous or start to wonder when my father gradually began to be home less and less.

### LOVED TO SEE ME HAPPY

I used to wonder why my mother never really told me that anything was wrong, but I've figured out that the reason was quite simple. She loved to see me happy, and she just couldn't bear the thought of wrecking my incredible happiness! And so, as the weeks that my father was gone lengthened into months, she never said a word. She kept all her sorrow and fear and uncertainty bottled up inside herself, and never for one moment did she let me catch a glimpse of anything but a smile. I can't even imagine how hard that must have been!

But of course, it couldn't be kept from me forever. I finally heard about it in the worst way possible, I guess. I was out in the street, playing stickball or something, and one of the kids I knew—a kid I didn't really like too much—came up to me and looked me in the eye. I can remember this very clearly, and I remember that I suddenly felt frightened. He said, just loud enough for everybody to hear, "Hey, I hear your mother and father are divorced!"

### I DIDN'T BELIEVE MY FRIENDS

Well, I must have been wondering about it subconsciously for some time, because the bottom of my stomach just fell out! I was so stunned and confused that I didn't know what to do or say, but I could feel them all looking at me, and I knew that I had to say something! My face felt hot, and I forced myself to answer.

"No," I said, "you're nuts! That's just in a play they're doing." That sounds like I was fibbing, but as I remember



ONE OF MY FAVORITE VACATIONS was at West Hampstead, a fantastic fishing resort. I still love to fish!

back, I know that I was so confused that I didn't really know what was reality and what was make-believe at that moment!

I could see by his face that he didn't believe me, and I ran all the way home, back to the safety of my own house, and when I got there my mother was sitting in the living room. Her face looked sad (although she put on a smile the minute I came into the room) and I just blurted it out!

### I ASKED THE BIG QUESTION

"Mom," I said, summoning all my courage, "are you divorced?"

Well, the look on her face told me the answer, but she couldn't bring herself to say it out loud to me even then. All she could say was "ask your father." I went to my room and threw myself on the bed and cried my heart out! I didn't know what had happened, or *why*, and I couldn't picture the future at all!

That weekend my father came to visit me. He was driving a new white Cadillac, because his career was getting better and better, and I guess he had come partly to take me for a ride in his new car. We rode around for awhile, and he made small talk, but I wouldn't say a word. There was only one question in my mind, and finally, in a blurt of frightening words, I asked it! He pulled the car over to the side of the road and looked at me for a long moment. And then, very quietly, he said "Yes. Yes, your mother and I are divorced."

### I KEPT CRYING AND CRYING

My whole world fell apart! I felt like I had been completely drained of everything inside me, and then I started to cry, and I just kept crying and crying as he drove me silently home. It was like I was suddenly getting very sick—I was crying, and I couldn't stop. I guess it frightened him and my mom pretty bad, because there was nothing they could do to stop me! I remember asking my father, "Will you still be my daddy?" All he could say was "Of course I will, David."

But the next morning, when I finally awoke from my nightmare-filled sleep, he was gone! For days and days I clung to those words, but as the time stretched out, I began to lose faith in him. My mother was openly unhappy now that there was no need to keep it a secret from me, and I blamed *that* on him, too. At first I used to hope that they'd get back together and everything would be like it had always been, but gradually I began to be really angry at my father, and I didn't want him back at all! In fact, there were times when I felt like I actually *hated* him, and it made me feel really *mean* inside!

### IT HELPED ME GROW UP

A boy really needs a father, just like a girl needs her mother, to help with growing up and becoming an adult. Even though I had persuaded myself that I didn't like my dad, and even pretended that I didn't want him back, still I know that his absence hurt me a whole lot! There were a lot of nights when I cried myself to sleep!

You know, when I look back on my life, I realize that a lot of the saddest times were actually the times when I grew most. Although my parent's divorce was one of the most frightening, heartbreaking things I've ever experienced, it helped me grow up, too! Before it happened, I was "Smilin' Sam," who was always happy and who lived in a fairy-tale world where there were nothing but happy endings. My parent's divorce taught me many things, and it moved me one big step closer to being grown-up!

*Next time around, I'll tell you about some of the big changes in my life, some of my fondest memories of my childhood and my acting debut at age nine! Take care and stay happy, see you here next month!*