

MY SON-DAVID

by EVELYN WARD

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Surfing was a big part of David's life from his seventh through ninth years of school. He was a real California "surf nut" and his hair was almost blond from being bleached by the sun. He surfed at Malibu and Santa Monica at every opportunity. He talked "surf talk" and hoped one day to be a professional surfer, travelling around the world—looking for that perfect wave.

A STAR IS BORN!

David was saved from a career of surfing when our friend Sal Mineo introduced him to the drums. Sal was an excellent drummer and he taught David how to play. Before long, Sal gave David his very own drum set (the set he used in his starring role in *The Gene Krupa Story*), and David set them up and rehearsed assiduously in all of his spare time.

Shortly after this, David began to collect records and soon there wasn't a time when he wasn't either working with some rock 'n' roll group or forming a group of his own. In fact, this "group music activity" became the pivot which swung David into the orbit that eventually was to pave the way for his show business career.

When David was 18 years old, he was in one of those ever-changing rock groups of his and he and the other boys decided they wanted to go to Florida during the summer to try to get work performing. At that time, I had just gotten a role in the Los Angeles preview production of a musical called *And So To Bed*. Somehow, I couldn't picture David and his friends running off to Florida like that. I had vague misgivings about the venture—and since there was a small part open for a young boy in *And So To Bed*, I asked David if he wanted to audition for it. David got excited about the idea and the audition was arranged.

I didn't think too much about it, but that afternoon my phone rang and the director, Nelson Barcliff, shouted from the other end of the line, "Evelyn—wow—you should have seen him!"

"Who?" I asked.

"David—at his audition!" he continued. "He was great, really great! He's got the part!"

I hung up the phone, delighted and somewhat astounded—for David and I would be working in the same show

together, only now David wasn't a little kid anymore. He was grown up. It was going to be very interesting.

In the show, David had a solo number in which he sang and danced—and later he had a small dialogue scene with me. We were in production for four weeks and the whole thing was fascinating. Each night David grew and grew—and got better and better! Maybe it sounds like I'm prejudiced in favor of my son, but such is not the case. I'm very objective and professional about David's work. And it was during *And So To Bed* that I saw a star being born. David stopped the show every night in his musical scene—and often got standing ovations. Each time he and I worked together, he added a little more to the drama of our scene. By the end of the show's run, I knew that my son David was on his way to stardom. Somewhere deep in my heart, I felt that those few hundred people who stood and enthusiastically applauded David during his "big number" each night would one day grow into the thousands. But I never dreamed that one day millions and millions of young people would "enthusiastically applaud" David regularly by watching him on ABC-TV's *The Partridge Family* and by buying his recordings on Bell Records.

ONWARD & UPWARD

I can't tell you how happy the experience of David's finally making it in show business has made me. After *And So To Bed* closed, David had many other adventures, but they'll be presented to you from his point of view in future issues of *16 Magazine*. You'll find out why—after graduating from the Rexford School—David left Los Angeles and tried to make it in show business in New York City—on his own! You'll find out about David's first Broadway "success"—and how what happened to him in New York gave him the discipline and determination he needed to come back to Los Angeles and start the difficult working life of a young unknown performer who dreamed of stardom, but little knew that one day—after featured roles on such shows as *The Survivors*, *Ironside*, *The F.B.I.*, *Adam 12*, *Bonanza*, *Medical Center*, *Mod Squad* and *Marcus Welby, M.D.*—he would achieve stardom as a regular on his own TV series.

As I look back over all the wonderful years of David's life I have described to you in the past issues of *16*, my heart is filled with joy and warmth. And when I turn my eyes to the future, there's even more joy in my heart. But combined with it is gratitude—gratitude to you and the millions of other young teeners like you out there in *16*-land. Thank you for making it all possible for my son David.



Here's David's school picture from the Rexford School book. When David attended Rexford, his classmates included Dino Martin, Jr. and Jon Provost.



Here's a snapshot of David (at 19) and a buddy of his the night David celebrated his graduation from Rexford. Shortly afterwards, he was on his way to New York City!