

he always had girl friends. His very first crush was on a girl who lived on the block where we lived. He was not quite five years old. I really shouldn't say "crush," because, in a way, David developed a crush on almost every girl he knew (and I'm happy to say that all of the girls reciprocated). By that, I mean that he didn't first like one girl and then another. He liked *all girls—all the time!*

Probably his best "girl friend" was his cousin Barbara, who was two years older than David. Barbara was the daughter of Stanley, my uncle (who was more like a brother to me). She had pretty, curly hair and an adorable personality. Barbara and David were a happy, adventurous, mischievous combination. I was always a camera buff and though David was a bit "moody" about having his picture taken, generally he liked it—and Barbara loved it! So no matter when or where a camera popped up, if the two of them were together—they hopped right in and started posing and doing cute, spontaneous things.

SANTA CLAUS & "DETERMINED DAVID"

David was a firm believer in Santa Claus. The first Christmas he remembers was when he was three and one half years old and his dad gave him an adorable clown-faced music box. That year, David also got his first tricycle. And let me tell you—he's been *mad* for wheels ever since!

Every Christmas the whole clan got together to celebrate the Yuletide. We usually ended up at my folks' house in West Orange, but sometimes it would be at "Unc" Stan's house nearby. No matter where we were, a wonderful time was had by all—and David and the rest of the children were the happy centers of "attention."

When David was four years and eight months old, he decided that he wanted a bike—a *real bicycle*. He refused to have training wheels on his bike and on the Christmas day that he got it, I learned quite a bit about my son—David.

We had a winding driveway by our house. David wheeled

out his bicycle and went to the beginning of the driveway. Several of us offered to give him some pointers, but he ignored us. He wanted to learn to ride his bike *on his own*.

Being a mother isn't easy. There are many times when you want to stop a child from doing something you know will hurt him, but there's a little voice inside that tells you, "Leave him alone." Even though I felt that David was going to be injured that day riding his bicycle, I knew that I should not interfere. So I went inside and left him alone. (Of course, I peeked out from behind the window curtains once in awhile to see how David was doing, but he never knew about that.)

About an hour later, I heard David calling from the driveway, "Mom, Mom, come out here! Watch me! I can do it!"

I hurried outside and David, with skinned and bleeding knees and elbows, proudly mounted his bike and said, "Watch this!" He pedaled down the driveway, turned and pedaled back. I applauded his brilliance and bravery—and never said a word about his battered body!

But that was a very important day for both David and me. David learned that he could do anything he made up his mind to do, and I learned that when David made up his mind to do something—well, there was no stopping him! He could really do it!

This wonderful determination (which some parents mistakenly call "stubbornness") was to prove to be one of David's greatest assets. For there was something on the horizon that was going to require all of the persistence, stamina and will that young David Bruce Cassidy could muster!

Again — that's getting ahead of my story. Meet me here next month, and in Chapter Three of My Son — David I'll tell you about David's first day at kindergarten, about the time he ran away from home and about his greatest disappointment.



David at three with some of his favorite toys—including his trusty "water pistol," which he used to "shoot" everything and everybody!



David in West Orange on his tricycle. His hair got noticeably lighter in the summer and turned darker again in the winter.



David at four and one half tells Muir's Department Store Santa—in East Orange, New Jersey—that he wants a two-wheel bike for Christmas!