



By **KATHRYN FORBES**

Author of "Mama's Bank Account," upon which the hit play and movie, "I Remember Mama," was based

# My Finest Mother's Day Gift

**T**HE YEAR WAS 1944, and the Sunday that was going to turn out to be my most memorable Mother's Day started off all wrong for me.

It was the third year of the war, and we lived on the peninsula, 15 miles south of San Francisco. My husband worked in the Richmond shipyards, and our sons, Bobby, 16, and Dickie, 14, were then in high school.

A quiet book that I had written about my Norwegian family had become, almost overnight, a best seller.

Suddenly, I was so busy playing author, publisher, and author-guest speaker, that there was hardly enough time left for my basic roles as wife and mother. Or time, even, to be a daughter.

My mother, almost 70 years old, lived alone in Oakland, across the Bay. With proud independence, she had resisted our efforts to move her closer to us. Although we talked by telephone every day, we did not see her as often as we would have liked; mainly because of the awkward-to-travel 30 miles between us. Since neither Mama nor I drove, getting from her place to mine entailed taking a series of buses, trains, and street-cars, each with its own capricious schedule. At best, the trip took hours.

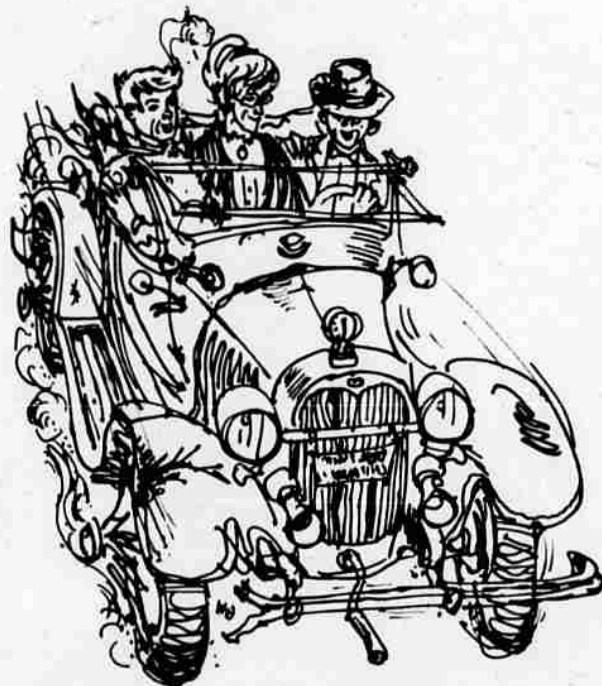
Time. I woke up that Sunday morning to the sad fact that there hadn't even been enough of it to plan a proper Mother's Day celebration for her. Last-minute preparations had been the best I could manage.

This was because, weeks before, I'd promised to speak at the annual Mother's Day luncheon honoring residents of the old-people's homes in San Francisco.

Consulting no one, I dreamed up a complicated schedule for my family that would allow us to visit Mother despite the loss of time my luncheon entailed.

First, we'd have a leisurely breakfast together. (The boys would undoubtedly have some simple Mother's Day gift for me—I'd accept it graciously.) After everyone was comfortably fed, I'd announce the program.

Since Dad would be driving me to San Francisco for my speaking date, I'd begin,



*A beat-up jalopy,  
two teen-age boys,  
and a conspiratorial  
grandmother are part of this  
heart-warming memory  
of a special Sunday long ago*

wouldn't it be practical for the boys to come along then, even if it was early?

No, I'd reassure them hastily, they *wouldn't* have to stay to hear me speak. They could surely find something to do in the city while I was busy.

At 3 o'clock, I'd say, they could pick me up, and Dad would drive us over to Grandma's. We'd take her out to dinner and make it a truly happy Mother's Day.

Alas. I had yet to learn that I could not write life as easily as I wrote my stories.

**T**HOUGH I LOVED my sons dearly, and enjoyed them hugely most of the time, never, never did I understand them. Fortunately, their father did. My husband saw to it that our sons got all the possessions that worry mothers. Just that spring, he'd allowed Bobby to buy a car with money he had made as an errand-boy.

Did I say car? It was a jalopy—a Model A open roadster that rattled and clattered, wheezed and clumped. Along with a raucous "Ah-OOH-gah" horn, it had a brazen wolf-whistle that could be pulled at appropriate intervals. So, even though earnestly assured that it was safely braked, and that Bobby was an excellent driver, I still refused it my sanction.

Of course, the boys were devoted to it. They called it "The Heap." I guess I should have known that, like any Sunday morning, car-talk would take top priority at the breakfast table. Only by withholding the pancakes until I got full attention was I allowed to speak.

And all I got for my well-laid Outline-of-Our-Day were three shocked, blank looks.

"But it's the jalopy meet in Belmont!" the boys protested in unison. "And 'The Heap' is entered!"

"This is the Sunday I have to work," their father said. "I told you last week. There's no car-pool on Sundays. I'll have to take our car. We'll just have to put off the visit to your mother till next week."

"Oh, no!" I wailed. "I was counting on..."

"I did tell you," my husband insisted, "several times."

"I forgot," I had to confess.

Morosely, I went to telephone my mother. I explained, as calmly as I could, and finished with, "We'll have to celebrate next week, Mama."

She remained cheerful. "I'll still be your mother next Sunday," she reminded me. "It

(Continued)

## COVER:

Leo Aarons' camera captures the joys of motherhood specially for this, her day. The whole family will enjoy sharing "My Finest Mother's Day Gift" (see above).

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