

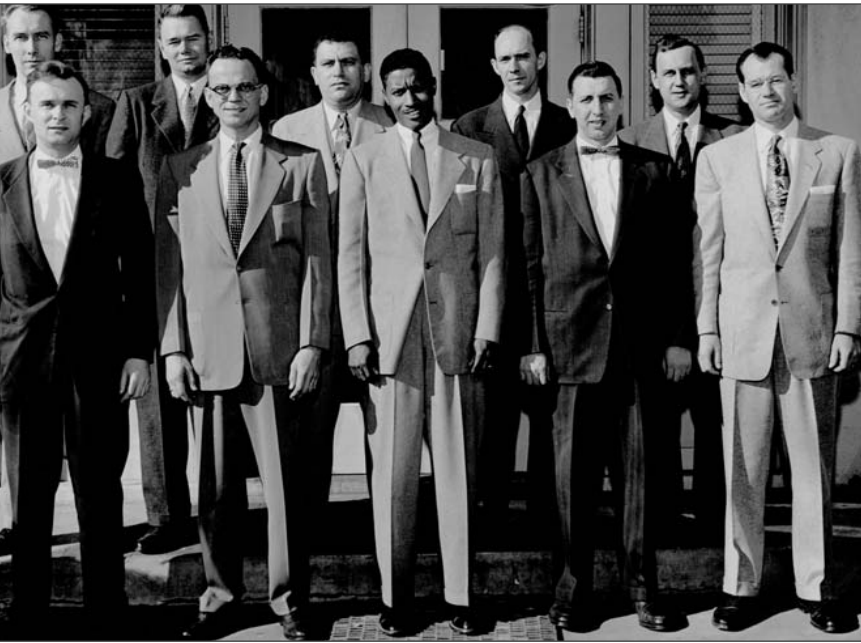


Eva Rutland at age 12 in Atlanta, Georgia

1

The Trouble Is . . .

The trouble with being a mama is you worry too much. You worry about why Tommy spits up his milk and smells so sour, why Archie sucks his thumb, why Annie can't grasp Spanish, why that "absolute doll" won't ask Doris to the platter-hop, why Patty has so many boyfriends, how on earth to keep eight wriggling Cub Scouts still enough to make eight sparkling pairs of earrings for eight sparkling mamas' sparkling Christmas presents (well, seven—you're willing to forgo yours), how to get children who don't like eggs to eat good solid breakfasts, how to stretch the budget to include those nourishing eggs they leave on their plates, how to calm a husband who doesn't like eggs left on plates that a budget had to be stretched to include, why other kids look so scrubbed and yours look so grimy, what to do about smelly feet (why doesn't somebody invent sneakers that don't make feet sweat?), how to get a bass fiddle and four-foot boy to school together without carrying them yourself, how to discipline Billy without warping his personality, how to keep your husband from warping Billy's person, how to iron blouses with no cat faces, how to get Tommy to wear his pants around



Bill Rutland with coworkers at McClellan Air Force Base, Sacramento, 1954

4 *Trouble with Papa*

Another trouble with being a mama is papas. Strike that.

What I mean is one of the *blessings* of being a mama is papas.

The trouble is most papas are people—men. Some papas are papas. I know because I read about them in novels and look at *Father Knows Best* on TV. And only this morning in the lovelorn column (I always read the lovelorns—makes me appreciate my mundane dishes, algebra, and “where’s my socks?” routine), I read a letter from a happy, appreciative woman whose husband is a real papa, and I quote: “He never speaks crossly to me and never denies me or the children anything we ask for if he can possibly get it. He always kisses me on returning and leaving home. When he is off work he spends his time at home, follows me around the house, and seems never too tired to give me a hand at anything I am doing. He doesn’t loaf on the corner with the boys or play pool or poker, but he does love to take the children and me to the mountains and just walk around admiring the trees