



How to lose weight, be pretty, popular, become a model, an actress, find a man to love . . . to Susan Dey's young fans, she is the girl with all the answers. Hundreds of letters arrive at Susan's California doorstep and her parents' New York home, all addressed to the vibrant, glamorous image viewers watch on their home screens.

It would come as a surprise to those who envy her that Susan is searching still for answers to some important questions: Am I an actress. or a star? Who can I trust in Hollywood? Will I ever find myself in love?

Robert and Gail Dey, Susan's father and stepmother, are obviously proud of their daughter, and happy about her success. But when we visited them in their Mt. Kisco home, they expressed misgivings about Susan's future in what Mr. Dey calls "that nutty place."

"We weren't so worried about her safety per se," Mr. Dey ex-

plained, "as the personal problems this career could bring. I think it's a lonely life for the people who are in it, a very unsettled life. You must be prepared for shattering experiences—not only disappointments in the work, but in the people you meet. The competition is so severe, I don't know how any of those people can relate to each other on a friendly basis. They're all potential cut-throats.

"The whole environment is a make-believe one," he continued, "and everyone is always play-acting. At some point it must get terribly difficult to tell reality from fiction and fiction from your own life, and this makes the life more lonely. We've already seen, with Susan, that it's becoming hard for her to relate to people outside showbusiness, because immediately they put her off to one corner, on a pedestal. She's no longer a person, but an image, an actress, something different.

"How can you have a normal

life, a meaningful relationship, if you have to *perform* constantly—even in an attempt to have a private life?"

Last summer, the Deys and their son Tom, 17, and daughter Elizabeth, 10, [pictured above] made their first trip to Hollywood to visit Susan on the "Partridge Family" set. Far from meeting a host of splendid escorts, they found Susan not dating at all! "She was getting phone calls, but was turning them down," Mrs. Dey revealed. "She really wasn't interested, because she hadn't met anyone that she liked well enough."

And, too, there had been one bad experience with a man—the kind of thing her parents fear. "Susan quickly learned about people who use others to get ahead," Mrs. Dey said. "She met one young man who she thought was nice, and started seeing him, but she began to have doubts about him very soon. I think she was even cautioned that he might