



fine," Jack said, obviously exhausted. "He's still drugged up and can't really make a lot of sense."

Standing by Jack's side, Shirley volunteered no comment of her own. When I asked if she wasn't glad the long night was over, she said only: "I'm glad that David's well. He's very young to have such a major problem."

As the two got into their white Rolls-Royce for a quick journey back to their Beverly Hills home—just long enough to freshen up, change clothes and return to Mt. Sinai—I asked Jack how long they intended to remain at his son's bedside. "As long as he's here," Jack replied. "David's a big boy, but it's comforting to know that *family* is close by."

Surgery had come at the end of a painfully long period for David. The gall-bladder infection must have been troubling him for many weeks, a close friend explained, but everyone concerned had thought it was an ulcer.

As one of the *Partridge Family* crew told TV RADIO MIRROR: "About six weeks ago, when we were doing the second or third show of the season, David suddenly seemed to have a terrible cramp in the stomach area while he was speaking his lines. He couldn't catch his breath, so the studio nurse and doctor rushed in and had him taken to his dressing room. He was doubled over—almost in a fetal position.

"He didn't make a sound, but everyone knew he felt lousy. He lay in there for the rest of the day. You know, David is usually so humorous and such a nice young kid, we all wished we could have taken the pain for him."

After a visit to his own doctor, the pain subsided enough to allow David to work again without discomfort. But his has always been a grueling schedule. He was shooting *Partridge* from Monday until Friday, then weekends found him traveling around the country on concert tours.

we have all the facts of the case now, but it wasn't easy to get at the truth when David Cassidy was rushed to a Los Angeles hospital on July 12th! For almost 48 hours after his emergency operation the next day, the world at large didn't know whether the 21-year-old star of ABC-TV's *The Partridge Family* was still alive or at the very brink of death. From the moment David was admitted to Mt. Sinai at 7:05 A.M., the hospital tried to conceal his presence from the myriad friends and fans who called there so anxiously. By 1:25 the next afternoon—when the young singing actor went into surgery—it seemed impossible to

deny that he was a very sick boy! But his actual condition was known only to his immediate family: father Jack Cassidy, step-mother Shirley Jones (femme star of *The Partridge Family*), and David's own mother, Evelyn Ward Silverstein. They had agonized throughout the three-hour operation performed by a team of experts headed by Dr. Arthur Brower, the noted Beverly Hills surgeon. They had waited, with equal anguish, until David finally regained consciousness from deep anesthesia at 7:45 that night. By then, they knew that the operation itself had been completely successful in removing the gall bladder which had been causing him

such frequent and excruciating pain. But trouble from this notorious repository of wastes from liver and kidneys seldom occurs until much later along in life. It is an extremely unusual problem for someone as young as David, and icy fear still clutched their hearts. It was at their request that the hospital issued no "progress reports" until three days later. Even so, this reporter managed to speak with a very weary Jack and Shirley Cassidy the morning after the operation, as they emerged from Mt. Sinai following an all-night vigil at David's bedside.

"David's okay and we think he'll be

## EMERGENCY OPERATION FOR DAVID CASSIDY!

Backed up by a musical group, he had been booked solid for concerts until the end of summer.

During the filming of the show's sixth segment, David became ill again. As his discomfort grew, he was away from the set for two days in a row, too ill to work. Scripts had to be rewritten, so they could "shoot around" him, but what they all were most concerned about was the young man's health.

"David had a remarkable way of keeping his pain to himself," the crew member continued. "When he felt an attack coming on, he would go into his dressing room and call for Shirley, but he wouldn't let the rest of us see it. He even apologized to us for holding things up!"

The worst attack yet came over the long Fourth of July weekend. During a barbecue at Jack's and Shirley's, he was stricken again and put to bed. The doctor ordered total rest and prepared to do further tests on him.

So—David reported back to work the following Tuesday, with plans to see the doctor later that day. He was thoroughly X-rayed, and the results were known only hours later: He had a small gallstone—not the ulcer they had suspected. And because it was infecting the gall bladder, the stone would have to be removed.

The operation was delayed a few days so David could complete a concert date he'd looked forward to in Wildwood, New Jersey. But flying back to Hollywood on Sunday night, he suffered another attack which his family describes as "the worse he ever had."

He was reluctant to enter the hospital that night, so he stayed with Shirley and Jack. But the next morning, when the pain became intolerable, Jack phoned the doctor. At the latter's direction, Jack and Shirley took David in their own car to Mt. Sinai, which is only ten minutes from their Oakhurst Drive home.

Because David would have to remain in bed at home for some weeks, even after leaving the hospital, the production of *Partridge Family* had to be shut down. "We couldn't shoot around him anymore,"

a crew member explained. "He was almost the whole show. The crew got their notice on Monday that we'd be laid off from four to six weeks. The staff got their notice Tuesday, when the hospital confirmed the severity of the case."

According to Doug Dutzman, publicity director for the show, "David's had the problem not weeks but years. It would come and go." When I went to Sinai to get the facts, a nurse told me: "It's one of the roughest gall-bladder cases I've ever seen. Because he's only 21, he's really going through murder!"

"He's resting and not complaining about the pain," a spokesman for David said. "They've done lab work on him again this morning [July 14], which is difficult for a very sick patient but imperative."

Throughout the crisis, David was watched over by Shirley, Jack and Evelyn. They sat outside his room on Sinai's fifth floor, only leaving his side to have coffee or a sandwich in the hospital's cafeteria.

In those hours, Shirley wasn't the "big movie star"; she was too concerned about her stepson to even freshen her makeup. In a pink pant-suit—and often touching her husband's hand to comfort him—she went virtually unnoticed by other visitors and patients.

She and Evelyn conversed often; it was a rare meeting for Jack's two wives who've kept their distance in times past. But David's illness took down the barriers; they cared only about his health and getting him well again.

Though David has his own apartment, a family friend told me he'd be convalescing at Jack's and Shirley's house until well enough to begin work on the ninth segment of his series. Meanwhile, he's had plenty of time to reflect that he's a very lucky young man!

If doctors hadn't found the real source of his problem, if the bladder infection had festered without check, it would have been fatal. If his true illness hadn't been discovered when it was—if it had been allowed to continue even another week or so—the result would have been tragic indeed.

—LARRY KING