

SHIRLEY JONES

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drop into his lap is unnerving. However, as soon as I know my kids are serious—in whatever they set their hearts on—I back them all the way.

"How could we legitimately object to Shaun going into show business, since everyone around him was in it?" Shirley can't pinpoint that historic moment when she witnessed her son's first flash of talent, nor did he ever strike her as having obvious acting ability: "He was not the greatest singer at five, nor did he ever win any amateur contests. The only hint we had was his tremendous enjoyment of performers and performing. Until he was ten, he did not know there was any other life, or that there was a world that did not revolve around the theater, movies, and music. I guess he must have been eleven or so when he decided to write lyrics for the piano and guitar."

And Shaun's brothers? Has the show business bug bitten them, and how do they all get along?

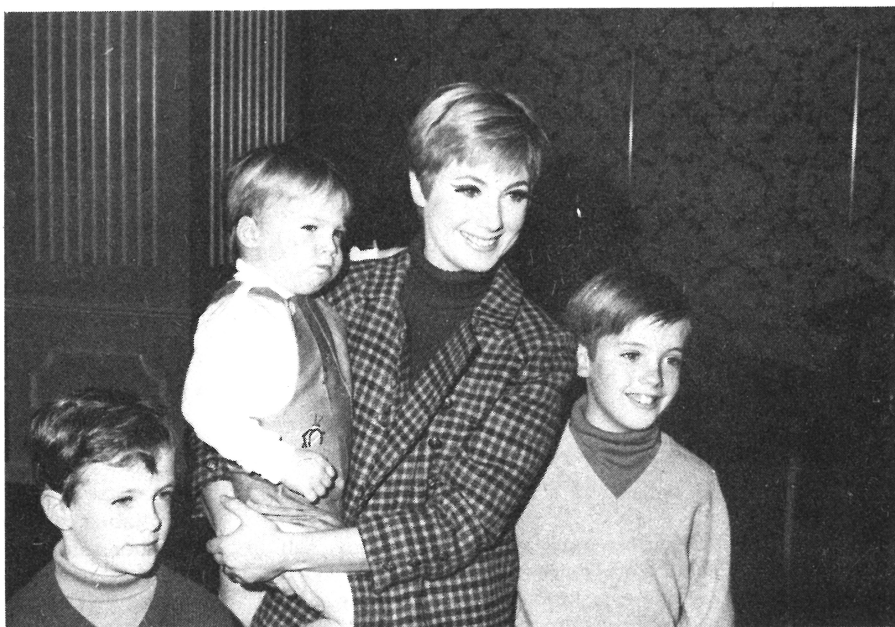
"There are no similarities between the three of them. Shaun and Ryan are a little closer in their thinking than Patrick and Shaun. Shaun is very aesthetic, more cerebral. Patrick is terribly macho, into athletics. Always putting his foot in his mouth. Shaun is the opposite. A thinker. He weighs words and waits for the moment. Ryan has no interest whatsoever in acting. He's very aware of all the fuss his brothers create—that they're in the public eye—because his pals talk to him about it—but it does not bother him and he could not care less. He's completely oblivious to what they're doing. The three boys are not extremely close, because of the difference in their personalities. However, they get along well. Shaun and Patrick do not pal around together, but Shaun and David are extremely close."

So much for the boys. How about Shirley Jones, who started out as the all-American girl-next-door? Through the years, she has earned herself the reputation of being a "goody-goody," and was once described as "giving the impression she has just emerged from a bath" (Shirley sums up these labels: "They make me look like a girl who is dull").

The actress is the first to admit



The late Jack Cassidy, with Shirley and son David at an Emmy Awards ceremony. They were divorced before his tragic death in a hotel fire last year.



Shirley in younger days with Patrick, Ryan, Shaun. Each time one of her sons was born, she wanted to quit show business, but husband Jack intervened.