

have a chance to say 'I love you.' "

A year after his father's death David met and married Kay. Of their separation he says: "Kay had her own life, and I had different needs. It's taken till I started seeing Meryl for me to feel I had an anchor in my life."

Meryl is the daughter of a retired director of Cape Technical College in Cape Town and the granddaughter of Irish horse trainers who emigrated to South Africa to fight in the Boer War. She attended her dad's school, modeled on the side, and after her 1965 graduation went to Canada. She became an assistant fashion editor on a magazine in Toronto, where she met Mark Tanz. They married in 1970 and settled in La Costa, Calif., where she took up horse breeding and fund raising for Jonas Salk's cancer research. "An idyllic life," she says. "We traveled for four or five months a year, renting homes in the Bahamas, Switzerland and France. Mark nurtured and

spoiled me. But the age difference caught up with us. In my early 30s I felt I wanted to be on my own, and I left."

To date Meryl's biggest success with Thoroughbreds has been Johnny's Image, who won \$350,000 and set three track records at Hollywood Park. For David, the value of horses is therapeutic as well as financial. They are, he says, "what pulled me through" his teen idol days. "People in the horse business have always dealt with me not as a celebrity, but as a horseman."

After Gibb was fired from *Joseph* in January for too many no-shows, David beat out Jimmy Osmond and four other finalists for the role. Says producer Zev Bufman: "David is the finest of the six Josephs so far. Andy had been the best actor, but he didn't have the voice. David has star command on-stage." Though Cassidy says "I *hate* the word comeback," he admits he feels "so lucky. I pinch myself wondering, 'Is this really happening?'"

After leaving *Joseph* in August, he will cut his first album since 1976, a collection of ballads and rock. Then, when his divorce is final, he and Meryl will wed, probably at their farm. For now, the farm is mostly her show. While he's doing his eight performances a week in New York, she oversees the horses. Recently, when Meryl was unsure about whether to syndicate or auction a horse, David flew out and helped her with the syndication deal. "I have never had a relationship where somebody has gone that extra mile for me," she says. "I admire David's humanity. He's good to his mother and to his friends."

When they're both on the farm, they like to walk with Caroline, study the racing news, and go on trail rides. As for the future, David has put showbiz behind him enough not to fret about being a superstar again. But there is a prize that they both dream of. Confesses Meryl: "Our goal is to someday win the Kentucky Derby." **MARY VESPA**

BUCK LARSON



"Meryl is loving, open and volatile," says David, at a Maryland breeding farm with a mare they own named *Our First Delight*.