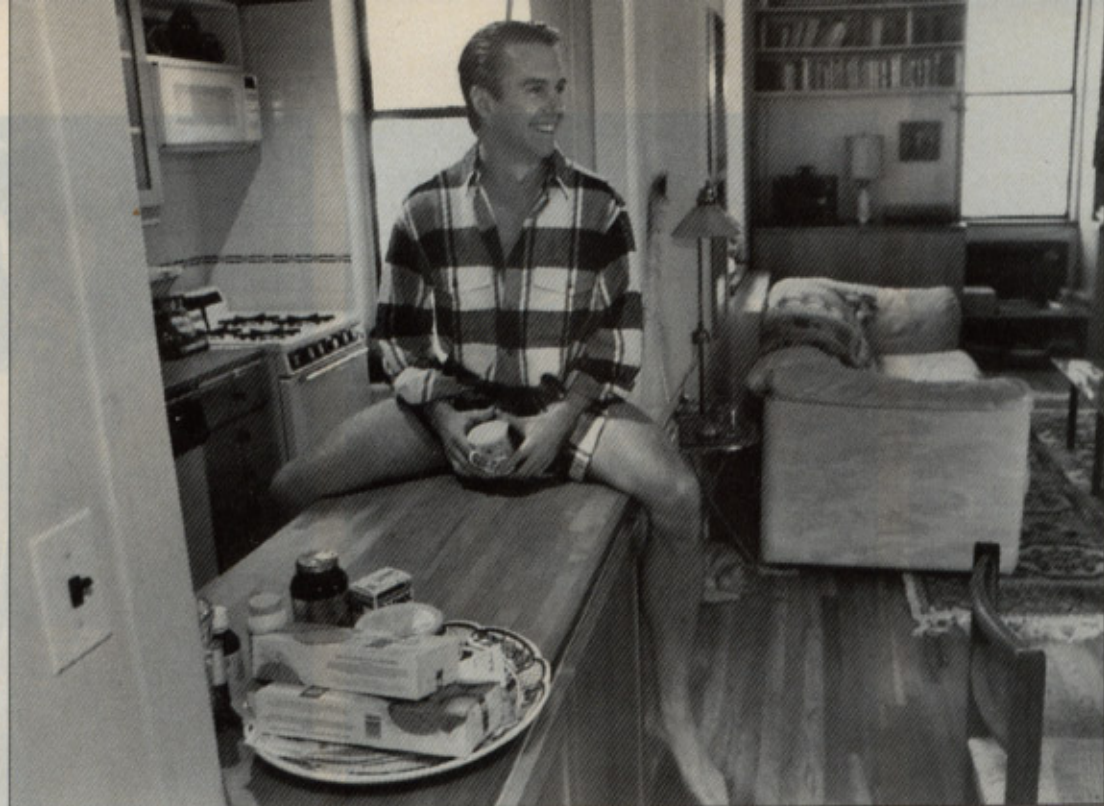


► "I'm serious by nature," says Shaun (in his Manhattan subplot). "But I try not to take myself too seriously." He is clearheaded about his profession. "It's show business," he stresses.

▼ Although he and model Ann Pennington divorced after 12 years, Shaun (with mom Shirley Jones and his bride at the 1979 nuptials) is grateful that "we still have a really good relationship."



HARRY BENSON



NONO COLONNINI

the concert. Sue retired to the loo and returned to find that David had cleared the suite to be alone with her. "I was so angry that he presumed he could just have me," she says. Although the evening ended chastely, they later began seeing each other when David would come to London. Nearly 15 years later, after her marriage to a London music publisher had broken up, someone asked her who was the nicest guy she had ever dated. "David Cassidy," she said, and vowed to look him up. "He's a

very caring, compassionate man," says Sue, "and so sweet."

As a teenager in the Cassidy-Jones clan, Shaun witnessed David's ascent from up close. "I think he was envious," says his mother, Shirley Jones.

"Probably," admits Shaun. "It looked like the greatest job in the world." (Shaun's brother Patrick, 31, is a musical actor, and his other brother, Ryan, 27, works in development at Jim Henson Productions.) While he was still a student at Beverly Hills High, a family friend introduced Shaun, the aspiring rocker, to a record producer. In 1977 he bounded onto the U.S. pop charts with a remake of the '60s ditty "Da Doo Ron Ron." Quickly he was dodging the screaming girls, à la David. But Shaun, whom his mother calls "an old soul," never took the commotion seriously. "The idea of being any kind of an idol is kind of embarrassing," he says. "My self-worth was never rooted in that."

Also in 1977, he reached a wider audience as impulsive Joe Hardy of *The Hardy Boys Mysteries* (opposite Parker Stevenson), which ran for three seasons. "Having a weekly schedule helped keep me grounded," says Shaun. Next he did the 1980-81 series *Breaking Away* and later acted extensively in live theater. Shaun's interest in writing and producing had manifested itself early on—in the late '70s he

had tried to option the rights to the book *Ordinary People*—but it wasn't until 1990 that he helped develop the short-lived CBS series *Over My Dead Body*. He went on to write and coproduce the film *Strays* for the USA network and has just completed a TV sequel to the Robert De Niro-Charles Grodin film *Midnight Run*.

In 1979, when Shaun was a mere 21, he married Pennington, several years his senior and the mother of then-9-year-old Jessica. They divorced last year. "Sometimes the harder you try to hold on, the more difficult it is," he says. Shaun, who lives alone in the San Fernando Valley, sees his children almost every week. "I take being a father more seriously than anything else," he says. He dates—but cautiously. "I'm a serial flirt," he admits. "But when I fall, I fall hard."

Shaun has put his teen-star past where he says it belongs—behind him. "I thrive on change," he says. "And as I've gotten older I've become less fearful about engaging in life."

Big brother David, who continues to tour and play Partridge faves, and who scored a comeback hit, "Lying to Myself," in 1990, has taken a similarly self-possessed attitude toward his career and his life. "It's mine now," he says. "And if I screw it up, I can't get angry anymore. It feels real good."

Additional reporting by LYNDA WRIGHT in Los Angeles. ►