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goods. He's incredibly charismatic. But he knows that the world's eyes would be on him. Still, he couldn't have had more love and guidance than from his mom and me, the kind of support I never had as I was growing up."

Your own father, Jack Cassidy, was a successful actor and entertainer.

"But he was a man haunted by personal problems. He was a manic depressive who drank heavily. He was a fabulous person in many ways but he had his own demons and, in the end, they killed him. There wasn't the proper medication in those days for someone who was essentially psychotic. I saw my dad's madness when I was young and it scared me. I never knew who he was going to be from one day to the next."

How well did you know him?

"He walked out on my mother and me before my fourth birthday. I worshipped him. For many years, I wouldn't admit to myself that he could possibly be flawed. Like most kids in that situation, I thought there must be something wrong with me, that it must be my fault."

How did you come to terms with it?

"As an adult, and in analysis, I began to sort out my feelings about him. I had nothing but love and respect for him as a performer, but he wasn't a great father. My half-brothers would tell you the same thing. I learned how to be a great dad precisely because my own father had shown me everything you shouldn't do."

For example?

"He'd come to one of my baseball games when I was a kid and leave after 20 minutes. I go to all Beau's games when I'm not working and I stay right to the end. Children need to know you're there for them. It's not complicated."

Were you and your father reconciled?

"Sadly, no. He died, alone in a house fire, at 49. I was 26 at the time and it seemed pretty young for him to die, even then. Now I've reached that age and gone beyond it, it seems a terrible waste. At the time of his death, he and I were totally estranged. He'd become utterly self-involved, completely preoccupied with his own pursuit of fame. He was so driven by the need for acceptance."

How did he regard your extreme good fortune?

"He never really achieved the kind of fame I had or that of my stepmother, Shirley Jones. And he minded. He didn't like being Mr Shirley Jones. But what drove him round the bend was being called David Cassidy's father. Shirley and I would be working together every day on *The Partridge Family* and she'd tell me how tortured he was."

Couldn't he take pride in your success?

"You'd imagine so, wouldn't you? That's how it would be for most parents. In fact, one of the factors that governs why I choose or reject major creative endeavours is precisely because of how much time they'll take me away from home. I want to be here for Beau. I like hanging out with him. Six years appearing in up to ten shows a week in Las Vegas meant missing Halloween, for example, six years in a row. There comes a point when enough's enough. But I'm only saying what you'd expect any father to say."

Do the demands of family and work leave time over for other pursuits?

"Yes, horses. I'm passionate about them. I don't have a farm any more, but my mares and foals are stabled in New York State and I breed thoroughbreds in Kentucky. And here in Florida, I have the horses that are in training. I've had some good winners in the last couple of years. I still ride for pleasure but not nearly as often as I used to. I got my first horse at 15. I've no idea where this passion comes from - certainly, I'm the only member of my family who's ever shown any interest in horses."

And the future?

"I could ask for no more than the balance I feel I've now achieved. There's not a day goes by when I don't thank God for the hand I've been dealt and my ability, in the end, to play it right. It's taken me many years to realise that I survived superstardom. I went away and, when I came back, I did it my way. You're looking at a very contented guy."

INTERVIEW: RICHARD BARBER
PHOTOS: ALAN OLLEY

...dinner on *Top Of The Pops*. But BBC wouldn't let me into the studio so they filmed me on the airport tarmac, then I was up the plane and the plane flew back to LA."

...did you get to know John Lennon?
...it happens, yes, I was lucky enough to talk a lot to John about how to cope with it all. He and I pretty much had the same take on it. When you get so famous you can't send out your laundry for fear it'll be stolen as a souvenir, you realise superstardom is a double-edged sword."
...did something you wouldn't want



David and his stepmother Shirley Jones (pictured left) starred together in the hit TV series *The Partridge Family*. In those days, David's captive image adorned a million locker doors, he was the biggest star in the world - but he didn't feel good about himself. Now, he has survived superstardom and has found content-

