

# Partridges' Following Is Building

HOLLYWOOD—"We have a lovely Christmas show," says Shirley Jones—Mother Partridge—telling about Friday's fantasy, in which the Partridges revisit prospector Dean Jagger in a ghost town.

The story combines humor with pathos in Shirley's eyes, and the results brought forth a note from producer Bob Claver to Jagger, saying "We're doing a comedy series here. So why did I sit there watching the daily rushes, dabbing my eyes and blowing my nose?"

Plugs by producer Claver and Mother Jones are really not needed to attract fans to "The Partridge Family Show" this season. It's taken off like a rocket with teeny-bopper idol David Cassidy at the controls after a year of growth. This winter's Christmas record album is a clue, with 500,000 orders in before release date.

"We didn't start out as a smash," Shirley said. "The show built steadily last season, and now it's gone out of sight."

Young Cassidy's sex appeal for young and old, better

scripts, better performances by the youngsters, and moderate opposition by the disappointing "O'Hara," and a spotty NBC movie schedule, are contributing factors. Finishing up 24 episodes by mid-December, a tired Mother, who works with kids all day before cameras and then comes home to run her own family, sees improvement in every department of the show.

"Susan Dey is 100 per cent better this season. She's learned to relax and concentrate. Danny Bonaduce has gained security, letting his humor come out," Mother said. "And our stories are tighter. I want to maintain the family feeling, and keep all of us together in a situation rather than pinpoint on episode around individuals. We also try to keep lines from being just a series of jokes."

Young Susan Dey, the New York model who is learning to act by working, believes youngsters like the TV family because it doesn't contain the usual generation gap. The children air their beefs, but Mom runs the show. Shirley Jones goes along with that, and claims adults watch the series for the same reason. She's a strong mother at home and she doesn't coddle the kids on sets.

"I'm very reserved with the children," Shirley said. "I remain an actress and treat them as performers. I don't make a point of being buddy-buddy. This way they're not so sure of me, and it keeps them off balance."

IT'S HARD to picture sweet Shirley as a tomboy, but she claims to have beaten up boys in the neighborhood, and relates how she would do anything on a dare. "Luckily, I had a very strong mother who believed in discipline," said Shirley. "I rebelled constantly and scarcely went a day without a spanking. Without that discipline I would have been a mess. I'm pretty much of a lazy slob, you know."

With her schedule, Mother Partridge has little time to even think about being lazy, moving from camera to recording studio for songs with David and outsiders. Trained as a soloist for light opera and musical comedy, Shirley found herself doing most of the background notes for Partridge Family recordings, and the change wasn't easy, since she had never learned to sing harmony.

As for her ability to pick hits, Shirley admits she's a dud. "For instance, the album, 'I Think I Love You,' sold three and a half million records, and I felt it was the worst thing going. You can almost bet the ones I like won't be hits."

Mother can't always be correct, but her instincts were right on the button concerning "The Partridge Family" series, originally titled "The Family Business." "I knew the family formula would be a success," Shirley said. "The only thing that could spoil it was a lack of rapport in the cast. That's something none of us worry about any more."



THE PARTRIDGE FAMILY gathers for Christmas. Clockwise from left are Dave Madden, Susan Dey, Shirley Jones, David Cassidy, Brian Forster, Danny Bonaduce and Suzanne Crough. The cast's Christmas show will be aired Friday on ABC.