

Changes minor in 'Partridge's' third season

By Charles Witbeck

HOLLYWOOD—Breezing along in their third season, those cheeping Partridges are still sitting high in television's pear tree.

Pop star David Cassidy hustles the concert road as far as London to be called the biggest recording star since the Beatles, and now young Danny Bonaduce seeks to cash in with a single out on record shelves for the Christmas holidays.

Otherwise, according to mother Shirley Jones, the changes have been minor. Brian Forster fell off a

horse and spent four weeks in bed, and a new school-teacher, Gladys Haney, took over as Brian and Danny advanced to the junior high level.

Season number three appears to be the time when writers sit around puzzling over new directions, with tentative romance receiving heavy play. Shirley batted her doe eyes at a politician running for the Senate around election time, Susan Dey initiated her first love scene with a minister a few weeks later, and hero David Cassidy flirted briefly with a visiting princess.

The one big move occurred this fall when the travelling family show actually dared to film a segment in public. Leaving their green womb, Columbia Ranch's stage 30 in Burbank, Calif., the cast and crew flew back to Cincinnati, Ohio, to film in the Kings Island Amusement Park and managed to complete the job without being trampled by shameless fans. The show, "I Left My Heart

in Cincinnati," appears in January, and Shirley Jones says, "it has a gloss and an enthusiasm" that is missing in the weekly stage-based product.

"This was an experiment, something I wanted to do the first year—actually travel," the actress told me. "Everyone thought I was crazy then."

"The traveling is expensive apart from arranging for guards and protection, but it does wonders for the performers. Also the crowds were polite. They just wanted to watch a television how being made. After the success we had, I hope we go out four or five times next year."

Shirley isn't exactly in the dark over ways to maintain audience interest in the show. "I live 'The Partridge Family,'" she says. "With three boys at home, episodes are written in my house daily. I've already been through most of the traumas by the time the writers think them up."

Looking ahead, Shirley wouldn't object to shows about the children growing up, with stories on the older Partridges going off to college—normal growth changes the writers haven't touched upon in the early going.

The actress, however, admits that the kids—child actors Danny Bonaduce, Brian Forster and Suzanne Crough—have not changed, although Susan Dey has expanded the most. "Susan was 17 when we started out, and she's changed from a

girl to a woman," Shirley reports. "It's been wonderful to watch."

Asked if she identified with the youngsters as they responded to the public clamor, the actress acknowledged that she felt the closest to stepson David Cassidy because she became an overnight discovery at the same age, 18, in the movie "Oklahoma."

Recalling those days, Shirley admits she was dazzled, but says, "nothing is ever quite as exciting as the dream." The former Miss Pittsburgh, a choir singer in Smithtown, Pa., population 800, was able to maintain her sense of proportion in Hollywood, taking the hulla-baloo calmly, not making a fuss—qualities she inherited from her father, a brewery owner.

"I believe in total heredity," said Shirley, "and I see it daily in my children. Shaun, 14, is logical and organized like me, and he sings and writes music. Patrick, 10, is more like his father, and Ryan, six, is hard to categorize yet. He's quiet and loves to be with adults so he can just listen."

Sweet Shirley has also inherited a regard for discipline which comes in handy around the house with three boys to manage. She wisely avoids the role of mother to the child actors on stage 30, and keeps her relationships with the youngsters on a professional level, staying in her dressing room between setups to maintain her sanity.

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