

Shirley Jones:

How Women's Lib Has Made My Marriage Better



Shirley and her husband Jack Cassidy were separated, but have recently reunited.

My date with Shirley Jones was for 3 p.m. at the Beverly Hills Hotel's Polo Lounge. When I showed up five minutes early, Shirley was already waiting. A bit unusual for an actress. But then, Shirley Jones is one of the more unusual people in Hollywood. That's why her separation from actor Jack Cassidy came as such a shock to her friends and fans. Shirley says they are reconciled now—so that's why I phrased my first question in the past tense.

FAMILY WEEKLY: Do you think "Hollywood" was responsible for your split-up?
SHIRLEY: I think our split-up had absolutely nothing to do with show business. It is the time we are living in. Marriage is becoming obsolete. The way we live today, it's hard to maintain a marriage.

FW: In what way?
SHIRLEY: Well, women are liberated, and men aren't too thrilled about it. We've become more individualistic. We try to be, we want to be as individualistic as a man.
FW: Does that mean that if you hadn't gotten married to Jack, you would just want to live with him and have children by him without the benefit of marriage?

SHIRLEY: No. Maybe if I were younger I would feel that way. But not with my background. I can't change that rapidly.
FW: Then what brought about the crisis in your marriage?

SHIRLEY: When I began to assert myself, to make my own decisions. It was a matter of my growing up, maturing in my own way. I was very young when I married, and eventually I had to grow up, become more opinionated. Let's face it—become more mature. It was a gradual thing. I didn't just change overnight.

FW: I've known you ever since you came to Hollywood, and I've never seen you lose your temper. Does this mean you've acquired a temper?

SHIRLEY: I'm not a screamer (unless I'm screamed at), but I am more capable of losing my temper now. And that's why I think my marriage to Jack is better now than it was before.

FW: What do you mean?
SHIRLEY: It used to take me too long to speak up, to let go. My husband loves a good fight. Before, he never had anyone to fight with at home. He does now!
FW: Shirley Jones has always been identified with wholesomeness. What was the reaction of your friends and fans when you were separated?

SHIRLEY: There was no change in my friends. Well, except for men—obviously.
FW: Why?

SHIRLEY: Suddenly I was available. I'd been married for 16 years. It was a new world for me.

FW: Did you like it?
SHIRLEY: Being available was interesting for a while. It was a different way of life, and I enjoyed it. But then going back to the cat-and-mouse game was kind of a bore. Honestly, I didn't realize people still acted like that!

FW: How did your children take the separation?
[Editor's note: Shirley and Jack Cassidy

"My husband loves a good fight. Before, he never had anyone to fight with at home. He does now!"

have three sons. Shaun, 14, Patrick, 10 and Ryan 7.]

SHIRLEY: Of course they realized what was happening, and they took it fine to a point.

FW: Meaning?
SHIRLEY: They didn't like my dating. But that's because they're boys, and I am their mother.

FW: What about your fans? How did they react?

SHIRLEY: Most of them said Jack and I should get back together again for the sake of the children—and mostly for David's sake! [Editor's note: David Cassidy is Jack's son by his first marriage.]

FW: How did David take your separation?
SHIRLEY: He was very unhappy about it,

but he didn't do anything to interfere, except to vocalize his displeasure.

FW: What did you learn from your separation?

SHIRLEY: I learned that you can't change anybody. That's something I should have known from the very beginning. In other words, if I love Jack—and I do—I simply have to accept him as he is. And once I accepted this I know that our marriage would be stronger than it was before.

FW: You say that people don't change. But didn't you just tell me that you had changed?

SHIRLEY: Well, that's different. Women's Lib or not, I guess if anyone changes in a marriage, it is easier if it's the woman.

FW: With David being so popular, how do you keep your other children from feeling left out?

SHIRLEY: First of all, by pointing out that what is happening to David is a once-in-a-lifetime thing. And more important, it is David himself who keeps them from becoming jealous.

FW: How?

SHIRLEY: David's miserable most of the time! They see that he has absolutely no privacy. He can't do anything he wants to do. They know he has money, but his life is a machine run by others. He can't go where he wants, do what he wants.

FW: Does this mean he will eventually give up being a performer?

SHIRLEY: I think the sooner the better, as far as he is concerned. He eventually wants to produce records for himself. He's already moving into it. That's what he loves most. And he makes those weekend silent because he loves music so much. As for "The Partridge Family" show, he just puts up with it. It's become a chore for him.

FW: Does this mean that your other children don't want to become performers?

SHIRLEY: No. But I won't let them until they're old enough to run their own lives.
FW: Why?

SHIRLEY: Because I think that being in show business isn't good for young people.

FW: Do your boys agree with you?

SHIRLEY: No. The oldest boy wants to

be a singer in a rock 'n' roll group. He usually performs at school, and he and three other kids have recently played for three Mr. Mirvaks at \$400 each. They call themselves "White Lightning." Newdays they practice at a neighbor's house, but they used to practice at our house. My days were like episodes out of "The Partridge Family." Like one day when I was driving home, I heard this horrible noise. The closer to home I got, the louder it got. And when I drove down my alley, I realized it was coming from my garage! It was horrendous!

FW: Any complaints?
SHIRLEY: Complaints! Not only did the neighbors complain, the police arrived! So I told them they were no longer to practice in the garage.

FW: And they accepted this?
SHIRLEY: Not at first. They wanted to practice in the bedroom, but I put a stop to that. Finally one of the kids talked his parents into soundproofing their paragon, and that's taken care of it—at least for the time being.

FW: What is Jack doing now?
SHIRLEY: He just finished a pilot—"Masters of Sweetwater"—in which he plays a teacher from Boston who comes to teach school in the West. My only fear is that it is too good, and the networks won't take it. But if they do, I think it will be a hit.
FW: And then both you and Jack will have everything you ever wanted?
SHIRLEY: We have enough now.