

Cassidy convinced Beverly Hills life broke up marriage

HOLLYWOOD — Now that Jack Cassidy is close to final divorce from second wife, Shirley Jones, he's decided he shouldn't have dissolved his first marriage to Evelyn Ward some 19 years ago.

"If I had stayed with Evelyn, my son, David, might have turned out better," he says with bitterness. "I wanted to raise him — but she wouldn't give him up."

Although 24-year-old David is right here in LA and has just signed a recording contract with RCA, his father says he hasn't heard from him in months and has no idea what he's doing in his post-"Partridge" period.

"That's all right, says Jack — making it apparent that he actually doesn't consider the situation "all right" at all.

"I don't care if David doesn't want to see me. I have three other sons who still love their father."

He would like to take over custody of those three sons by Shirley Jones (who range in age from 9 to 16), and says, "One of them wants to live with me."

Then, cynicism even more pronounced, he adds, "Beverly Hills kids? You offer them enough gold — and there's no problem buying their love."

From his vantage point, a Beverly Hills lifestyle caused the break-up of his 18-year marriage to Shirley.

"When we reconciled after our other split two years ago, I begged her to let us move to a more stable area, but she insisted Beverly Hills schooling was important for the boys. Hell, what about their sense of values. At age 16, Shaun is the owner of a '71 Cadillac convertible!"

Moving right along — to Jack Cassidy's professional life: Universal studios wants Cassidy to play the late John Barrymore in the film, "W.C. Fields and Friends," with the search still under way for a "Young Mae West." Rod Steiger has just been signed to handle the title role.

Jack as Barrymore in his declining years couldn't be better casting. He looks — and acts — so much like the great profile, it's absolutely eerie.

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