

Shirley Jones proud of sons

By MARILYN BECK

Shirley Jones is experiencing mixed emotions as she watches ABC's "The Hardy Boys" series stardom sweep her son Shaun, to the status of idol of the underaged masses

Shaun is 18 years old, just a few years younger than his half-brother, David Cassidy, was when David became America's Teenybopper Delight via exposure on "The Partridge Family."

As co-star of that "Family," Shirley was a ringside observer to the pressures and pains experienced by her stepson as his fame and fortune grew. And she says now, "A giant success at an early age can be tough. Also, a great deal of money too young can cause one to lose incentive

"Yes, I am concerned about Shaun. But he is talented and stable for his age, and seems very aware of what can happen. I only hope he can handle whatever comes."

Since his fame fled, David has handled life by moving far away from Hollywood. For a while he lived on an outer isle of Hawaii, and now he resides on a ranch in Santa Barbara — only 60 miles from Los Angeles, but a million miles removed in spirit from the world where the teenage female masses made his concerts and records hits, and often made his private life a misery.

"David's writing a lot, breeding race horses, and producing and recording music," says Shirley. "He's truly contented now."

She uses the words "truly proud" to describe the emotions she's felt toward Shaun and her two younger sons, Patrick, 15, and 11-year-old Ryan, in these days of adjustment to the death of their father.

Since that terrible day in December when Jack Cassidy perished in an apartment house fire, says Shirley, "I've watched my boys become men in front of my very eyes. They have handled it marvelously.

"They miss him and I miss him terribly, too," she said of the man she divorced in 1975, "They talk about Jack a lot, talk about how lucky they are that he was their father - and how very proud he made them."