

David was told: "You can go on the stage ...but graduate first!"

SO David was born on April 12, 1950, and the important thing now is to find out just what sort of life he'd been born into. For his parents, Jack and Evelyn Cassidy, it was a moment in a life-time ... the birth of their one and only child.

It's been said, in THAT kind of fan-magazine, that David let out some kind of yell as soon as he saw the world for the first time, and that that yell was perfectly in tune and so everybody knew that he was cut out to be a tremendous star in the show-business world. All a load of rubbish, naturally.

But, nevertheless, he was born into a kind of show business atmosphere. His mum, Evelyn, was a talented singer and dancer, and she was much more into the classical field of music. She'd been to musical training classes at the famed Carnegie Hall ... it didn't mean she was good, but it did mean that she was very keen on good music as being part of the way of life.

And there was dad. Jack Cassidy was in the musical side of the theatre, but nobody really knew his name outside of the few people who sang and danced with him in the chorus on stage. He was to go on and make a name as an actor ... maybe you saw him in a Colombo movie on television recently where he was a cold and calculating and very cruel crook.

But in the days when David was just a little lad who needed his nappies changed every two hours or so, Jack Cassidy was the sort of goodlooking leading man who wound up singing the odd song of romance to his leading lady and generally clicked, but big, with the ladies in the audience. He usually got the girl.

Maybe that's where David got his talents from. Because for sure Cassidy junior gets the girls, and he sings the prettiest songs, and it would not be easy to cast him as some kind of villain.

Anyway, let's not analyse the situation. Let's just accept that David was born into a show-business family. Not top-of-the-bill as a family, but happy enough with their lot, and always determined that one day things would be better.

Now everything seemed just fine for



David gets ready for some gardening at home.

David at that time. But nobody actively encouraged him in his ambitions to get out there on stage and wow audiences with a smile, a dance and a song. In fact he was told, when he was but four years old, that his mum would support him if he wanted to go on stage ... but only when he'd finished with high school. And graduation, even if he'd understood what the word meant, was years, ages and generations away!

Actually, something quite memorable and nasty happened to David when he was very young ... around eighteen-months-old. He was being pushed around the neighbourhood - in his pram, and by a girl who was acting as babysitter. She pushed him up to the top of a pretty steep hill, then lost her concentration while she spoke to her boyfriend.

That she forgot completely that she was supposed to be holding on to a pram is surely not entirely HER fault. But that pram really started to roll. Down and down, faster and faster, it rolled ... and David started making noises that certainly wouldn't have got him into the Hit Parade. That pram was only a short way from crashing into an oncoming car when ... in the nick of time that babysitter's boyfriend found his senses, rushed forward, and saved the life of one of the biggest pop stars ever!

There was a certain amount of gurgling from the aforementioned future pop star. But David lived to gurgle another day ... and also he grew up to realise that kids born to actors often had to spend their lives largely in the company of babysitters or watchers.

In the Hollywood tradition, you might be born backstage in a trunk at the Palace Theatre ... but in real life, if your mum and dad were actors, then you could count on spending a lot of time away from them.

So, more often than not, David's dad was away from home. His mother coped well, but there were times when she sobbed and felt lost and lonely ... times when David, a sensitive little lad, felt he was sharing the problems of his mum.

In the end, David was to know for the first time the dreaded word ... DIVORCE. His mum and dad split up, and Evelyn Cassidy was to remarry and divorce again, and Shirley was to become his stepmother and his television mum in the Partridge Family series.

Maybe, looking back on that turbulent period, it was wrong that both his mother and father were so reluctant to tell David that they really were splitting up. David was only five, remember, when he first heard the word DIVORCE. It seems that the kids on the block were insisting that his mum and dad were divorced - that word again - and he had to go back home and look it up in the dictionary. He found out what it meant (and that showed that he was one heck of a bright kid) and taxed his mother about it.

In a sense, he had been that much closer to his mother than his father who had, so often, been away touring in his job in the theatre. He asked his mother and she insisted that he should hear what was going on from his dad. Maybe she figured that there was still a chance for the marriage that had produced a nice kid and was going wrong mainly because the father had to be away from home so often.

In the end, there was the dreaded moment when his father (and he loved his father) came and collected all the clothes and belongings and went away. For ages David forced himself to believe that it would all work out right in the end, that



And does some relaxing with a bikeride - or just sitting!

his dad wasn't really going away for good. He kidded himself. And who is to blame him. But in the end he had to learn that the divorce had gone through ... and he heard it from his father.

That taught David all sorts of lessons. For a start, he realised that his own little world COULD be hurt by things that other people did. He realised that he couldn't just expect that things would be exactly right for HIM ... and maybe that explains how interested he is now in matters pinpointing pollution, ecology, cruelty to children and, maybe strongest of all, cruelty to harmless animals.

How do you explain this kind of breakup to a kid of David's age? Just try talking about irretrievable breakdowns, or irreconcilable differences and you'll get a blank look. That, surely, was no kind of explanation to a kid who'd lost his dad. And David went to live with his mother, Evelyn, and he was happy enough, except that he worshipped his father, and he only wished that things could be right again.

There are stories from his mum that David used to sit in his room and play over the records which his one-time singing father loved. David would sing along with those records, and he'd just dream of the time when he could be friendly again, full-time, with his dad. Maybe go fishing, or swimming with him ... oh, the hell! It was all over ...

In fact, only a couple of years to go by before Jack Cassidy sent for David to go over and visit. In California. To meet his new wife, the blonde and lovely Shirley Jones. Like most kids caught up in this kind of situation, David went into that first meeting convinced that nothing could alter the fact that he'd HATE that lady who'd married his dad. Her very presence, he figured, was splitting further his old family life.

But anybody who has ever met Shirley Jones knows one thing, instantly. She's one nice, friendly, warmhearted and completely natural lady. Even if when you meet her she's already your stepmother so there's nothing you can do