

royal, devoted fans, I'd be their only means of contact with David . . . Talking to me as I was about to go to his rooms, or as I came back out, would perhaps be the closest they'd ever get to talking with David himself. It was a sobering thought, and made me even more nervous than I was already.

Relieved of my bulging baggage by a boy who carried it upstairs for me, I glided up in the lift — leaving my stomach behind somewhere en route — and padded along the thickly-carpeted corridor to David's door.

POLITE

They say that first impressions are always right. Well, in this particular case, they happened to be wrong. When I entered David's beautiful suite, my photographer was already there setting up his equipment and David was looking on with no very great interest. He just looked up and said hello. But it was only too plain to see that, polite as he might be, he'd really have preferred to be left alone for a while. He'd had a stream of interviews since landing in Britain: he'd already answered the same old questions many times over. And he was obviously fed up to the teeth with the whole business.

At the start we were both ill at ease: David because he was trying to put on a show of liking me and being enthusiastic about the interview . . . and me because I could sense that it was a show and that he

David seen talking to Elliot Mintz who is currently writing David's autobiography ▶



was feeling uncomfortable about it. So, for a while, we played a kind of Question and Answer 'tennis match', each dutifully returning the ball when it came into our court. Between times David munched, without interest, at some black olives and peanuts. But he was fundamentally not very interested. There were terrible moments when I'd ask a question or make a comment that I felt sure would snap him out of his mood — but he'd just shrug.

I began to wonder if it was worth carrying on. In my own mind I'd labelled David as 'cold and distant'. It all fitted with reports I'd heard from writers in the States who'd come up against the same problems with him. Then the thaw started. David would occasionally smile spontaneously instead of 'switching it on' for the camera; he began to talk more freely and actually offer information instead of me having to wring it out of him!

MISLEADING

I realised then how important it was to be with David for a fairly long session. Anyone who met him for only half an hour could quite easily go away with an entirely wrong impression — as I might well have done myself. It certainly brought home to me how misleading press reports my be — especially as they're so often the result of snap judgments . . . like the one I'd made on David. Hence some of the bad write-ups he's had, particularly in those early days before he'd really mastered the art of publicity. Because there's no doubt about it: David's 'press' technique has definitely improved through the years. For a start, ▶