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her. She started out sweet and young and then she really became a mother. She's got three kids, Shaun's eleven, Patrick is eight, Ryan is four-and-a-half and I mean she's really a woman. And all along, through the years, she's never left me out, never considered me just my father's son. I was another member of the family, she never had the attitude that 'you kids go out and play and you go sit in the corner.' Anything they did, I did, she made no distinction between us. When I was young that really made me feel good.

"As a matter of fact, she always leaned in my favor. When Shaun was a baby he was a brat, like every baby, and wanted everything for himself, which made me pretty up tight, she'd always say, 'Let David have it for a while, you've had it long enough.' She was always fair. I can remember the one time she scolded me, she didn't even raise her voice. I was fooling around, teasing Shaun. He was screaming and I didn't dig it, so I started playing ball and wouldn't let him have it and she said, 'David, don't do that.' It was the first time she'd ever spoken that way to me so I knew I'd bugged her. But there was no running and telling my father. Nothing like that. She's very steady and constant."

■ Not only that, she has always adored David, was always very proud of him. This was a girl from Smithton, Pennsylvania, population 800, where divorce was unheard of. She faced the most difficult dilemma of her life when she fell in love with Jack Cassidy who was separated, but was still for her strictly taboo—a married man. When she did marry him their life had to include David. She wouldn't have had it any other way. Their house in California included, not a nursery, but a boys' room with bunk beds for Shaun and David, and every weekend

when he was with them, he helped with his small brother.

David always felt wanted there, he still does, "I can drop by any time. . . I'm there at least once a week for dinner, so that I can eat at least once. I also dig the older brother routine. I never had any other brothers or sisters, and I think these kids look up to me. We communicate pretty well, especially Shaun and I. He is getting turned on to a lot of things about 'now' and he can ask me because I wasn't there too long ago. Our dad can't exactly remember when he was eleven—I can."

The most important time he ever spent with them was in New York when he was just eighteen and Jack and Shirley were doing *Maggie Flynn*. His mother and stepdad had just recently been divorced and David felt he wanted to tackle the theatre. He came to New York and lived with them for three or four months.

"There were a lot of things I didn't want to hear," he says now. "My dad was laying on the fatherly advice which I didn't want to hear—some of it I couldn't accept. But he made me get my own self-discipline going, because he'd had the same trouble himself. He made me see how irresponsible I was and how dependent on everybody else. I wasn't looking after myself, I was looking for people to do it for me."

"Finally he said, 'If you want to do it, and you are the one who said you are going to do it, then do it. Don't just talk about it. Do it and do it right. Don't goof yourself the way I goofed myself at your age.' And he was right, absolutely right. I just couldn't, you know, accept it, and then all of a sudden, it was exactly what I needed because I was a noodle. I went out and started doing it. I took classes at the David Craig School of Musical Comedy and won a co-starring role in *The Fig Leaves Are Falling* on Broadway. I auditioned five or six times for it. They had narrowed it down to two of us and they put us on stage to read, sing, dance. That was the beginning of my growing up. It was the beginning of my communicating with my father—just the fact that he's come to respect me to an extent—we had something else to communicate on rather than being a father and son. None of that. We don't talk at each other, we talk with each other."

■ He came back to Hollywood after that, started getting television parts and went nights to LACC. His stepfather had always wanted him to go to college and get himself well educated and even though he no longer saw his stepfather, the influence was there. "Like he knew everything, he'd been in college like ten years. He was so knowledgeable. I'd ask him a question and instead of answering me, he'd say, 'You can find it in this book.' I still look for the answers in books but I found the college classes a waste of time."

So he went ahead with the acting and the music (he plays guitar and drums) and one day the strangest thing happened. He was interviewed for a new TV series in which he would play a boy named Keith Partridge who sings and plays the guitar with a family musical combo—a real music freak who writes music and wants to record. They asked him to come back again, and then again. It was down to two of them for the part. Then they asked him to come back for a test with his "mother" on the series and all of a sudden someone said, "David, I'd like you to meet Miss Jones." He turned around and went "Oh, no! Wow! What are you doing here?" And Shirley said, "I'm doing it, didn't they tell you? I'm Connie Partridge."

"Really strange," David says. "It took

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