

grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Ward. I lived with them until I was 3, then again from the time I was 6 until I was 10. They were really marvelous people. My grandmother was a piano teacher. My granddad was a business man for various public services. She passed away just three years ago, but he's still going strong today, at 81.

"If there is anyone in the world who is pleased with my success, it's my grandfather. We just have such a very special relationship. You see, my grandparents had a hard time when they married. Their first five children all died before the age of 3. Then my mother came along. She, too, almost died as a baby, from a strep throat.

"So, when my mother grew up and got married and had a child, we were both very special to her parents. My grandmother did try to baby me every once in a while, but my mother watched out for that! Everything considered, I feel as if I had a very wonderful, warm and loving childhood.

"I was 5, going on 6, when I found out my parents were going to get a divorce. It was very traumatic. My mother and I went back to live with my grandparents in West Orange. Just before we moved, there was a period when I didn't see too much of my dad . . . but I was used to his being away on the road with shows.

"Whatever trouble there was between my mother and father, they concealed it very well. I really didn't even know there was anything strange going on until some of the kids at school told me that they read in the paper about my father and mother getting a divorce. I didn't believe them.

#### "Will you still be my daddy?"

"Then one day my father came to pick me up and take me for a ride. I'll never forget," David says solemnly. "We were out driving and we were right near the Lincoln Tunnel when I just put it to him straight. I said, 'Dad, are you and Mom getting a divorce?' So he told me. What can I say about that day? I guess I really went bananas. I mean, it really hit me. I just didn't know what to think or say.

"But I remember asking him if he'd still be my daddy. He said, 'Yes, of course.' He told me that I could come and see him and be with him whenever I wanted to, and that just because he and my mother were not going to be together anymore, it had nothing to do with our relationship . . . he would always be my father.

"That day, when he took me home, I kept thinking about it. In fact, I did a lot of wishful thinking. For a while, I used to hope my folks would get together, get married again. I guess it was so hard for me to believe because I never remember my parents fighting in front of me, or arguing, or *anything*. Actually, I realize

now that they just didn't want to hurt me. But I *was* hurt. It's only natural for a kid to feel bad at a time like that. . .

"For a while, I retreated into a shell of my own. Still, I was totally aware of what was happening. I understood the whole scene—except for the fact that I still wasn't sure my father would always be my daddy. I know now," David smiles, "I should never have doubted that!

"My dad and Shirley were married in 1956. At first, I didn't see him too often because they moved to California. But he'd come back East a few times during the year, and we'd be together. One time, when Dad was East, he told me about Shirley's movie *Oklahoma!* I hadn't met her yet. Dad wanted me to see her, so he stopped at a theatre and we went in to watch the last ten minutes of Shirley's picture. When I saw her on that big screen, all I could think of was that she looked so young and so very beautiful!

"When I was 8, my father sent for me, so I took a trip to California. I had a wonderful time. From the first time I met her, I never resented Shirley or disliked her. That would be *impossible*. She's always been so nice to me—more a friend than a stepmother—and from the very first, we got along swell. I came out and spent time with them the next year, too. Shirley was pregnant then with Shaun, the first of my three 'kid brothers.'

"When I was between 8 and 9 years old, my mother enrolled me in a drama school. I went for a little while. I was sort of interested, but I really didn't want to get too involved. Then, when I was 10—right before Mom and I moved to Los Angeles—someone offered me a job in a soap opera. My mother didn't want me to take it. Both she and my father didn't want me to become involved in show business . . . at least until after I finished school.

"When my Mom and I first moved to California," David admits, "I really didn't like it. I was used to the small-town scene. Hollywood was sort of overwhelming. But the longer I lived here, the more I began to like it. The freer I felt. I made friends, started school, and I adjusted.

"First, I went to Fairburn Avenue School in Westwood. Then on to Emerson Junior High. Meanwhile, in 1962, my mother remarried. She became Mrs. Elliot Silverstein. Then we moved into a house on Glenbar Avenue in Cheviot Hills. It was my favorite house of all the houses I ever lived in—a very beautiful Spanish-style home with tiles all over, and thick beams, and carved woods.

"When my mother married Elliot, there was no big trauma involved. She had been going with him for quite a long time. He used to pick me up from school, we would all go on trips weekends, so I really got to know Elliott and to like him very much. One day, my mother picked me up from school, and she said, 'I just got married.' I said, 'To who?' She said, 'To Elliott.'

"I said, 'That's marvelous,' and I meant it. That night, when I saw Elliott, I was really very happy. I asked him, now that he was my stepfather, if he was going to sleep over at our house, and he said, 'Yes, if it's okay with you.' I said, 'Sure, it's fine,' so he moved in.

"We became really good friends," says young Cassidy. "Of course, he was away

a lot because, when they were first married, he was directing *Cat Ballou* and was all wrapped up in his work. But Elliott was always so bright and sociable. If there was ever anything I wanted to know, I would ask him. He would tell me, or he would tell me how to find the information I needed. I always respected him for his character. He is a very stimulating human being. I have a lot of good memories of things that Elliott taught me, a lot of insight that he gave me.

"This was a very happy period of my life—living with my mother and Elliott—spending weekends with my father and Shirley. Moving from one house to another. It was a lot of fun. . .

"Anyway, I went to public school until I was 16. When I turned 17, I went to Rexford, a private school. Between my 16th and my 17th year, I went through a rough period. I sort of dropped out of school. . . . First, I had mononucleosis and I *couldn't* go to school. Then I didn't *care* if I ever went back. I just became a lazy human being. All the while I was being lazy, it gave me a bad feeling to know that I was just a nothing, just *blah*—I really couldn't live like that. Before, I always had to be doing something. Now, I just moped around for a while. . .

"Then, all of a sudden, I had a flash of looking at the pattern my life was taking. I saw myself going down and down. I felt—well, you know—*cheap*. Not worth anything. I had the feeling that I was going to stay a nothing unless I woke up fast and took stock of myself. So I did. I woke up, went back to summer school, and took all solids I needed in order to graduate. . .

"While I still was at Rexford," David recalls, "I got involved with the Los Angeles Theatre Company—strictly on my own. It was my first grown-up venture into acting. I worked with them for a while, until I finished school, then I decided to go back to New York. At that time, my father was starring on Broadway with Shirley in a musical called *Maggie Flynn*.

"While I was East, my dad and I had a long talk. He encouraged me to give acting a try. He has always been in my corner ready to back me up. So I stayed in New York for a while until I finally decided that was exactly what I wanted: *to become an actor*. I wanted to be in the theatre, the movies, TV. I guess I just had to follow the path that was always so close to me. . .

#### The only success that counts

"One thing about staying in New York, though—I wanted to be on my own. It was okay for Dad to encourage me, and for my mother to be behind me (she and Elliott were divorced in 1968 and she was back East again) but I wasn't about to take the easy road. If I got anywhere, it had to be because of *me*—my talent—and not because of any connections I had that could open doors. I never wanted to make it that way . . . it wouldn't have been satisfying at all!

"I got a part-time job in the textile industry, working in a mill. I would go out on interviews during my lunch hour. I *really* 'pounded the pavements.' I didn't have any good credits. It was pretty rough, trying to get that first job. I just kept

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