

mother. Now, I know Evelyn very well, and she wouldn't feel that way if David were closer to home and she saw him more often. But she doesn't, and it is unfair that Shirley gets more of a chance to be a mother to David than Evelyn does."

Evelyn could go to California, of course, but it's a place she really holds no love for. Her life is in New York, and if she were to go to California, she would be forced to be utterly dependent on David. Then, without any life of her own, she would really be forced to make big demands on David—and that is something she really doesn't want to do.

On the other hand, David cannot be expected to deliberately cut himself off from Shirley. He owes her too much as well. Like Evelyn and Jack, she, too, helped David get over some of the roughest points of his childhood.

"She was always very kind to me from the beginning," David remembers. "I could tell she loved me even though she wasn't my real mother, or I her own flesh and blood. She never showed any favoritism over her three sons when I stayed at Dad's house. She made me feel as though I belong to her family, just as I belong to my mother's family."

"But that's really all right with Evelyn," says another family friend, "so long as David knows both who he is and who she is, and if she asks for anything, it's only to remind him of that."

We wondered, at that point, if the story we'd heard, that Evelyn had also asked for a percentage of David's salary had anything to do with that.

This source, who is close to both David and his mother, laughed. "Believe me, Evelyn couldn't care less about money. All she wants is David's closeness and his acknowledgement of her as a mother."

But our informant did admit that Evelyn's demands at the moment, as understandable as they might be, did put her at a disadvantage. For Shirley asks nothing of David.

"It's funny," David, himself, has said, "Shirley never tries to tell me what to do or what not to do. Perhaps at times, she will suggest certain things to me, or on the show, she might show me the right way to read a line. But I'm grateful for all of this. I know she is doing it, not because of Dad, but because we have a great rapport between us."

But all the same, Shirley is David's step-mother, and because of that highly emotional, ego-involving situation, there has to be some kind of conflict. This is a situation neither Evelyn, David or Shirley are ever allowed to forget, and the roles they play can get very mixed up.

Shirley, for example, does not really need to be demanding of David in any way. Although she certainly treats him like a son, as she does her three other sons, David really lived with his own mother until he was twenty-one. Now, to Shirley, he is an adult. She gives professional advice because she has had the experience

to do so, and because she is interested in David's professional future as well as his personal one. But most important, David is there, able to give without being asked. And he himself cannot help but feel the division in his loyalties.

"He really is torn between them," an associate tells us. "I've even heard that it bugged him so much, he was even toying with the idea of staying out of showbusiness altogether. You see, David blames the break-up of his mom and dad on the business. He really believes they would have stayed married if both hadn't been so busy traveling and giving in to the pressures that showbusiness is bound to make."

For David, in way, showbusiness was the thing which did scar his childhood more than anything else. Yet by the time he'd graduated from high school, he knew that the career he wanted, the things he could do best, lay in that field. He had to try, and without anyone's influence or help, he made it.

He laughs when he talks about winning the role of Keith on "The Partridge Family." "It was ironic. I never even knew, when I tried out, that Shirley was cast to play my mother on the show."

Nor did he realize that this very success would necessitate a move to California, away from his real mother in New York, and that Shirley would, in a sense, be cast in the role of everyday mother as well. Showbusiness, while dealing him incredible success on the one hand, had also managed to scar his life once again.

Though neither woman has ever—or would ever—pressure him to make a choice between them, it could make life very much easier for David if he could. He could make up his mind that his family life really was in California, close to his father, half-brothers and step-mother, and he knows very well, that though his mother would be terribly sad about it, she wouldn't stop him. What's more, if his mind were absolutely made up in that direction, she would not only accept the situation, she would make no demands on him at all.

But he cannot do that to the woman he adores more than anyone on earth. He owes her too much. And in a way, one source close to the problem admits, he almost likes her demands. They do keep him involved with her emotionally, and that he enjoys. But he doesn't enjoy the feeling of conflict—the feeling that he might be forced to choose between her and Shirley.

On the other hand, he might alleviate his mother's fears of losing him by not seeing so much of Shirley. But that, too, would be so unfair to this woman who has treated him as his own flesh and blood. It would be impossible for David to hurt either of these women deliberately. He owes them each, in separate ways, so very much. And so, he is the one who remains hurt and conflicted by his separate but equal loyalty to both.

Perhaps the most conflict—and the hurt—came out most obviously last Thanksgiving, when Jack and Shirley had a small spat which separated them for two days.

Now, as many of David's friends have suggested, he never really believed his own mom and dad parted because they didn't love each other. He's always believed that it was the pressures of their careers that parted them, and a favorite childhood dream was that, somehow, they would get back together again. If he were less mature, he might have pounced on the opportunity to bring them back together. But David is very mature for his age. What's more, he simply could not bear to see his father or his beloved Shirley unhappy. So instead of taking advantage of the situation, as he might have done, he was determined to bring them back together again.

"David's mother," a friend of Evelyn's told us, "didn't want him to interfere. Not that she wanted anything to happen to Jack's and Shirley's happiness. She wishes them only well. But she didn't want her child mixed up in their marital problems. After all, she tried so hard not to involve David's emotions when she and Jack broke up. She didn't think it fair to involve them now."

But, of course, David was only six when Jack and Evelyn parted. Now he was 21, and felt he could do something.

"I hated to see Dad and Shirley separate just when things were going so great for both of them." And, of course, there was the love and loyalty he bore Shirley from childhood. So, in spite of his own feelings, and his mother wishes, David called both Jack and Shirley, trying to patch things up. The first call Shirley got after the separation was from her step-son David. The first call Jack got was from his son David. David visited each one separately, finding out what he could do. Then he brought the two together to talk things over.

The result? Well, as everyone knows, Jack and Shirley are back together again and happier than ever.

It must have cost David dearly to go against his mother's wishes. But he could not ignore his loyalty to Shirley. Nor would he ever ignore the loyalty he owes his mother by ever acknowledging Shirley to be anything but a dear friend, with no blood ties at all.

There must be times when he hurts both these women—when their interests, their feelings, their attitudes towards him clash—and David is forced to make a decision that seems to favor one or the other. But the real one hurt is David who is so sensitive to both their needs, and tries so hard to walk that thin line between them. What he hasn't realized yet is that no matter what he does, both of these women do, right now, understand his conflict. And while they may ask different things of him, he has never yet been reprimanded for a decision he has made