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David Cassidy

Continued from page 37

on the floor, drums, guitars, guitar cases, a hi-fi and piles of record albums. On the wall was an oversize photograph of the late Jimi Hendrix and under it a sticker reading: JOHNNY GOT HIS GUN. Ceiling-to-floor windows in the corner looked out on hillsides covered with smog haze.

Cassidy is not crass; he chose the bedroom for our interview because it is "his" room. There is another bedroom somewhere, occupied by a roommate, and a bath and kitchen. With the charm of a male Perle Mesta, he insisted on getting us a chair—an excellent suggestion which eliminated the necessity of David and his press agent and myself settling on the bed, an arrangement that at my age would have made for a weird *ménage à trois*. He ran upstairs and returned in five split seconds with the sort of box used by milkmen for storage of bottles. He set it on end for us, volunteering the information that it was the chair he sits on when he eats. It seems there's a table somewhere in the house.

It should be made clear at this point that we do not intend to put down David Cassidy. For all his bare feet and flared jeans and tank top and the Indian headband he promptly clapped around his skull (perhaps dressing for the interview), he is a charming, thoughtful, intense and well-bred young man. Whether or not he would like such a description is a moot point, but we make it anyway. He would probably prefer us to say—which we will—that he is a remarkably free human being, a pure product of his own generation, living as he damn well pleases. ("I live really weird and a lot of people are put out by it.") But try as he might to reject his upbringing, it nonetheless seeps out and the mixture makes him one of the younger set that the Establishment—if it can shake itself loose enough—ought to admire.

Slight of build, perhaps 5' 6" and 130 pounds without shoes, he has truly hazel eyes and an olive skin that belies the Irish ancestry inherited from his father, actor-singer Jack Cassidy. David is 20 years old, but barely manages to look 16.

"I guess I get it from my parents," he said. "My mother has never looked her age and my father—well, he still looks like a mannequin."

The elder Cassidy and actress Evelyn Ward were divorced when David was a small boy, and Shirley Jones has been his stepmother for 14 years. Oddly enough, the two look alike; people who've seen *The Partridge Family* often remark to David that he looks like his mother, and he has to explain that Shirley isn't, really. Although he doesn't define the fact, it's obvious that the split between his parents profoundly affected his life. Until he was 10, he lived in northern New Jersey "with my mother—and my father, at times," then with his maternal grandparents, whose house still spells home to him. He claims he had the privilege of a normal boyhood—"Little League, dirt under my fingernails and all that"—but he was an early rebel. One school after another requested that he depart forthwith.

"I didn't make out too well in public

school, mostly because I never went. I couldn't accept the punch thing where everybody was a number. I was completely disinterested in school—I got sort of lost." Putting it lightly, he added, "I lacked a certain amount of stability."

He firmed up a bit when he moved to Los Angeles to live with his mother in another house that meant a lot to him—Evelyn Ward's home in Cheviot Hills. In that period he attended a private school, where classes sometimes numbered three and where the teachers touched the rebel Cassidy.

"I even got interested in reading," he said. "Looking back, I'm sorry about going from one school to another because I think that upset my mother a lot. And she has lived a lot of her life for me."

Following graduation from the private high school, he went back East, living briefly in the guesthouse of his father and Shirley Jones in Irvington-on-Hudson. The reason for the move to the East was show business deeply ingrained in him through his parents and his love of music. He recalls that he was three years old when he first saw his father on stage and immediately began singing songs from the show. At six he was soloist in the church choir, "the one who stood up and sang 'Silent Night' at the Christmas service." Guitar came a few years later and at 14, when he got his drums, he was already proficient with the sticks. He was 18 when he tackled Manhattan and although he roomed and boarded for a while with his father, he was forced to take a job as a mailboy in the garment industry.

"I hated it. The worst. I'd run out for auditions during my lunch hour and pray, 'Please God, I really want to sing and act.'"

His prayers were answered when, after five auditions—doing the same thing each time—he landed a role in Allan Sherman's play *The Fig Leaves Are Falling*. After the fifth go-around, the decision was narrowed down to David and another boy. Cassidy says his life flashed before him and when they said they'd like him to stay, his knees literally buckled. He rehearsed in the play four months; it ran five weeks in Philadelphia, two and a half months in previews—and one-half week on Broadway.

But he'd made it, even if it was only three nights on the famous Manhattan Milky Way.

After that, he gave college a fling. He attended night classes at Los Angeles City College, working during the day on TV roles in *Ironsides*, *The Survivors* and *Marcus Welby, M.D.*, among others. As a psychology major, he felt "insulted by what college offered," and whether or not the lure of show business bred impatience, he quit after one semester.

It was the end of his formal education, but the beginning of energies devoted fulltime to show business. David considers his role of Keith in *The Partridge Family* a boon because it allows him to both act and sing, "which for an actor-singer is an unusual opportunity on television." The term actor-singer recalls Jack Cassidy, whose son is cast in the same mold of talent, yet David insists he has never stood in his father's shadow nor traded on his name.

"I never mentioned the fact he was my father," he says. "As a matter of fact, we're so completely different you can't compare us. We're from different worlds. He sings legitimate stuff very well; I don't know if he does contemporary music. But I have my own thing—I'm my own person."