

# DAVID CASSIDY: I HAD TO LEAVE CHURCH TO FIND GOD

Faded Levi's—open windbreaker—bare toes digging into damp sand.

"I had a strange feeling within me," David says. "Somehow I sensed that a lot of questions I had been carrying deep inside were about to be answered. . . ."

Every seventh wave came in with a rush, pounding, thundering with power—receded and returned.

David Cassidy felt free and open and receptive—attuned to the world about him and aware of the mysterious hand of God in its creation. It was a moment to remember and return to again and again: a moment when David Cassidy changed his mind about God!

One look and you know David has been brought up to brush his teeth regularly, wash behind his ears, say "Please" and "Thank you" at the proper time—and go to church or Sunday school on Sundays.

David, the shy, boyish, pensive young man with the dreamy long-lashed hazel eyes is one of those "sudden successes": he's aimed toward an acting career most of his life. What's "sudden" is the way he's suddenly influencing all ages to smile fondly and get reminiscent whenever they compare this well-mannered, smiling young man to "today's kids." David's 21, but he plays 16-year-old Keith in the *Partridge Family* series—and everybody knows when he calls Shirley Jones "Mom" it comes naturally. (She's his real-life step-mom.)

It was his real mom and his grandmother who inspected his fingernails, tucked in his shirt tail and supervised the combing of a shiny, wayward cowlick before he set off on Sunday mornings for church.

"I went to church from the time I was—oh, I don't know!—I went to church for seven years straight," he says, "and I didn't miss a Sunday!" He flashes that captivating smile and adds, "But I don't go to church any more now. . . ."

He's no longer the little boy with the slicked-back hair. He's a young man, 21 years old last April 12th—old enough to vote or not to vote. Old enough to sing what he calls "sophisticated blues rock" (not music with a message, according to David. "I'm not out to get it all together for everybody else—just for me. If

people want to listen to what I'm saying, that's okay").

David sang in the choir when he was a very little boy. "I think I sang louder than anybody else because even

then I loved music and songs," he remembers. He may have been too young in the beginning to absorb all that was being said from the pulpit, as he sat between his mom and his grandmother.

David's mother (Evelyn Ward) started her singing-dancing-acting career while she was still a teenager, as had his father. Jack Cassidy began as a teenage chorus singer. David spent lots of time with his grandparents in nearby New Jersey, but when he was six and his parents separated, he went to live with them, while his mother pursued her career.

David's grandmother was a piano teacher, and now music became even more a part of David's daily life. From the time he was a toddler, he was particularly drawn to the music when he attended church, and music and church both seemed to be woven into the pattern of his life. Having David, their only grandchild, trusted to their care was a joy and a special comfort to his grandparents.

"Of course, I was a little too young to know what church was all about, but I was in the choir and I loved that!" he says, which must have been particularly gratifying to his elders, though he admits, "As I began to get older, I began to get restless, too. During the sermon, I found my mind wandering and often I discovered I was questioning the things I had learned. I was beginning to wonder why it was so necessary to go to church to be with God.

"Eventually, I began to feel I wasn't really learning anything about God any more—the feeling that there was a lot more to learn than the church could offer me." He was starting to seek answers for himself in the great outdoors and in quiet moments of solitude.

But David's interest in music continued to grow and by the time he was 11, he was playing a guitar. At 14 he was playing drums and spending long hours listening to the music of others, in the way of teenagers—beginning to think of music almost as a "special friend." And music and God sort of went together. . . . /

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