

BY CECIL SMITH

Shirley Jones: the new Pied Piper of young viewers

Shaun Cassidy, the 13-year-old son of Shirley Jones and Jack Cassidy, took his mother aside the other day and said: "I've got some bad news for you, mom."

"You can imagine how I felt with what you hear about teen-agers these days," Shirley said later. "But I brought him here into the study, shooed the other kids out and closed the doors. I waited for the worst."

"Shaun stammered around awhile, then blurted it out: 'I want to go into show business!'"

It isn't that Shirley and Jack have led their children to believe that the profession they practice so successfully is so dreadful, but that it is hard work—there's no fairy princess waving a magic wand to put you up there in a spotlight.

But the young Cassidys, Shaun and his two brothers, Patrick, 10, and Ryan, 6, have not only their parents as models but the spectacular career of their stepbrother David as an example of how quickly it can happen. David Cassidy's singing career earned more than \$1 million in concerts last year in weekends he wasn't working with Shirley in *The Partridge Family*. This year, his gross could easily double last.

And as Shirley said when David's career took off: "We never knew he sang. He was just around the house fooling with a guitar like most boys do."

Shaun, says Shirley, does more than just fool around with a guitar. He sings and plays in a neighborhood group Jam, Jelly & Preserve—"one thing you can say for the group, it's loud!" Now she finds young Pat sitting in on drums whenever he gets the chance. And Ryan is looking for a spot.

"It looks like you're getting a Partridge Family of your own," I said.

"That'll be the day," said Shirley.



David Cassidy and Susan Dey share a moment of merriment in the Partridge Family.

She has ever been one to leave show business at the stage door. The great delight she has from doing *The Partridge Family* is that she can leave the studio every night and come home and "play mother." Not wife. Her 16-year marriage to Jack Cassidy has faltered and they are separated—"at least, for now," she says.

Shirley giggles when she says she's never felt "the least compulsion to work." Ruth Aarons, who manages all the Cassidys, puts it another way. Shirley won't sing in the shower, says Ruth, unless she has a contract for it.

During the three-month hiatus from the series while David has been on the concert trail in one-night stands, Shirley has turned down movies, night-clubs, anything else offered her except a Bob Hope special for Oscar night.

Then when she arrived at rehearsal in sweater and slacks with her costume bag over her shoulder, she looked so much like a Beverly Hills housewife on the way to the supermarket that the stagehands didn't recognize her. That is, until she began to sing "Jesus Christ Superstar."

Their kids would have known her. Shirley is convinced from the series that every kid on earth knows her.

"I went to Sun Valley skiing and it was like being the Pied Piper with long lines of children following wherever I went," she said. "I can't take my sons to Disneyland without a complete disguise. That never happened to me before."

That seems curious in a career as long and lustrous as that of Shirley Jones (on the cover). The study where she held confrontation with Shaun gives testimony from its paneled walls to that career. Here are framed covers of old garish movie magazines, posters from Broadway plays such as "Maggie Flynn" in which she costarred with Jack, a plaque announcing her Oscar for "Elmer Gantry," another for her Emmy nomination for "Silent Night, Lonely Night," still others for her gold records from *The Partridge Family*.

Her career shot up as quickly as David's. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II plucked her out of the chorus of their "South Pacific" on Broadway to star in the movie of their "Oklahoma!" But though she'd been a singer all her life, she never made records until she became the mother hen to the singing Partridges on the immensely successful ABC-TV series. Like the series, the records are mostly beloved by the bubblegum trade.

"If I did a movie, it would have to be as different from Shirley Partridge as 'Elmer Gantry' was from 'Oklahoma' or 'The Music Man,' said Shirley. She shrugged as if to add: "Who needs it?"

She went back to work last week for the third year of *The Partridges*. She said the only changes in the series she's heard about are the possibility of some location shows.

"If it happens," she said. "I don't really care. I've spent most of my life on location."