

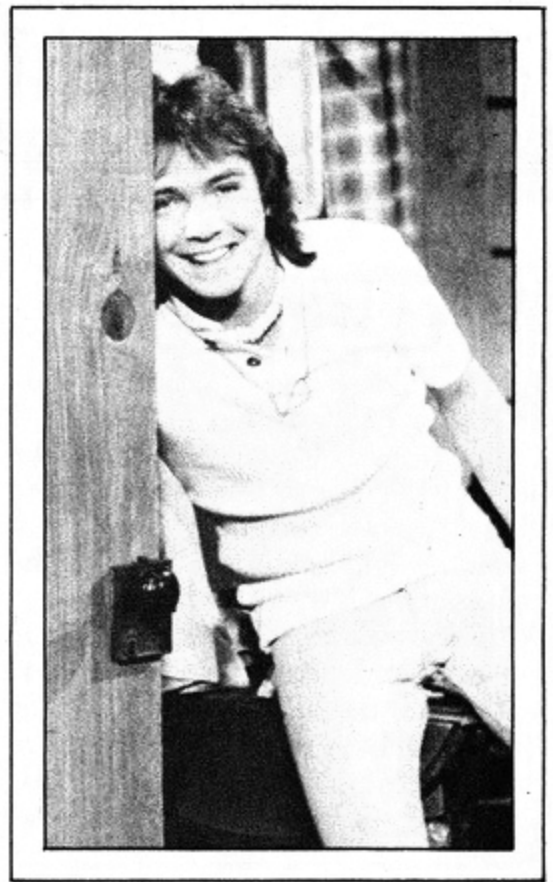
He braced his feet and dug his toes into the hard dirt. If he felt as if he'd missed something all this time—was it possible that his fans had their regrets, too? A frown creased his forehead and, strangely, the air didn't smell as sweet as it had a moment before.

He gripped the ropes a little tighter and a tight feeling seemed to close around his throat. He'd never thought of it that way before!

During those hours when he was in the studios recording songs, he had to admit there were moments when he longed to be home or anywhere else besides there! But, then,

the moment would pass as he realized he was there because he wanted to be there! He wanted to be there making records that said, "I love you and I thank you" to his fans. And this was something that always won over those brief moments of wanting to run.

He ran his fingers through his hair and kicked the swing into motion again. Now, it was strange to think that maybe those times when he'd been working towards a way of paying his fans back for their loyalty—maybe his fans didn't think they were worth it now? Maybe, now, that he was leaving the Partridges—



his fans would want to leave him, too?

A leaf fluttered down gracefully and brushed David's cheek. He reached out to grab it and stared. It was funny that a leaf could be so beautiful on a branch but still have a beauty of its own after it was torn from the branch. He turned the leaf over and over in his hand.

He loved his fans—he always had! "Little leaf," he whispered, "am I like you too? Can they like me as much away from the Partridges as they did when I was on the show?" David grinned and tucked the leaf in his pocket.

He was glad he was alone! If anyone heard him talking to a leaf, they really would think he was ready to be carted away. He jumped down from the swing and scooped his sweater off the ground. It was time to go to work.

He looked back over his shoulder at the tree. He was silly to have let himself worry about regrets. He didn't have any—none worth keeping anyway! He had gotten a lot of love while he was with the Partridges; love from people he met or didn't meet, but still people who loved him and believed in him.

He patted the leaf in his pocket. It was knowing that he had at least known that kind of love that made it all right! He grinned as he walked to his car—his fans had told him they loved him and he had told them. Now, they had that memory and that for David Cassidy was enough to keep him happy for a long time!

