



## The Partridge Family idol never found the sense of lasting joy he gave his fans

For most of David Cassidy's devotees, he remains forever frozen in their memories as the feather-haired, fresh-faced '70s teen idol from *The Partridge Family*. In reality, the star would've been 71 this year.

"The idea that the little boy I came to know and love as my stepson would've [turned that age] is astonishing to me," says co-star Shirley Jones. "And I am grateful for all the wonderful times that we shared together."

David was equally fond of Shirley, 87, who married his

father, actor Jack Cassidy, and played his mother on *The Partridge Family*.

"She taught me so much about how to deal with fame and success," David said. He also became close friends with her sons with Jack: Shaun, Patrick and Ryan.

But David, who died of liver failure at 67 in 2017, didn't have the kind of idyllic home life that the Partridges portrayed on TV. Jack and his wife Evelyn Ward were both travelling actors, and David was raised by his grandparents in New Jersey. "David had to find out from the neighbourhood kids that his dad divorced his mum," Chip Deffau, who co-authored his memoir *C'mon, Get Happy...*, tells *New Idea Retro*. "That left a scar — who could he trust?"

That wasn't the only emotional damage Jack

inflicted on his son. After David became a superstar, Jack "found it difficult to cope with my fame and success and that he had not achieved a higher level," David said. "I loved and admired him, but I just couldn't find a way for him to have it be OK for him."

David struggled with success as well. "I became so famous, isolated and unhappy, I had to do anything I could to end it," he said. But after the show ended, David couldn't rest. "There were bad investments, and he partied too hard," says Chip. David admitted: "I was one of the wealthiest young male entertainers in the world, but then I had nothing to show for it."

"By the '80s I was broke."

### *I THINK I LOVE YOU*

His romantic life was equally turbulent. David's first two marriages — to actress Kay Lenz and horse trainer Meryl Tanz — ended in divorce after only a few years each. The falling star

had a daughter, Katie, in 1986 with model Sherry Williams but never had a relationship with her. "I was her biological father but I didn't raise her," he said.

Things began to turn around when he wed Sue Shifrin and had a son, Beau, in 1991. "His birth changed my life," David said. "As a father I do everything my dad didn't do." Chip says: "When Beau started Little League, David not only made sure he went to every game, he also became Beau's coach. Becoming a good father meant more to him than making money or having a hit."

Sadly, David became dependent on alcohol over time, and it caught up with him later in life. He and Sue divorced shortly before his death, but his fans never stopped loving him.

"He gave them so much happiness," writer Chip observes. "I wish he could've experienced more of it himself."

By Katie Bruno

Cassidy boys Shaun, David, Patrick and Ryan join Shirley at a charity fundraiser. Right: Showbiz ran in the family for David and father Jack.

