

Jack Cassidy's Career Moving Out From His Family's Shadow

By VERNON SCOTT

Hollywood (UPI)

JACK CASSIDY has spent most of his talented life in the shadow of his own family and only now is coming into his own.

For more than 15 years he was Shirley Jones' husband in the public mind. You know, the handsome blond guy who popped up in movies now and then.

THEN, JUST as Jack was beginning to emerge from the image of being a movie star's spouse, along came "The Partridge Family," starring his son by a previous marriage, David Cassidy.

It was a double whammy. Costarred in the weekly situation comedy with David was, of all people, Shirley Jones.

Now Jack suffered an ambivalent identity crisis.

The public had a choice, David's father or Shirley's

husband. Youngsters preferred the former. Traditionalists stayed with Shirley's husband.

A proud Irishman of considerable theatrical background, Cassidy neither basked in the reflected glory of his wife nor passed out cigars on behalf of his offspring.

Nor was he ever heard to complain that Shirley and David put a crimp in his own career.

Rather, he smiled—perhaps a bit tautly—and hung in there.

HE WILL portray John Barrymore, the great profile, in Universal's "W. C. Fields and Me" starring Rod Steiger in the title role.

Moreover, he has a fat part in "The Eiger Sanction," Clint Eastwood's new thriller which will be released later this month.

"Ah, yes," said Jack Cassidy, "I am a late bloomer."

"All that identification with Shirley and David is changing at last. In New York, however, in theater circles I was and am better known for my own work than I was in the rest of the country."

Since his divorce from Shirley earlier this year Jack's career as well as his identity have turned around dramatically.

"I've cleaned house since the divorce," Jack said. "I got rid of my manager and formed Richmond Hill Productions, my own company. And I did 'Knuckle' for the Public Broadcasting System."

"I've never been so busy, which I attribute to the culmination of a lot of things that have been cooking for me."

One of the reasons Cassidy was cast as Barrymore is an astonishing similarity of profile to the late, great star.

"PEOPLE HAVE told me

all my life that I looked like Barrymore," Cassidy said, "even his sister Ethel."

"When I was a chorus boy in New York back in 1945 I asked her for an autograph backstage one day. She said, 'You look like my brother.' I was tempted to ask if she meant Lionel."

Jack isn't worried about being identified in the future as the guy who played Barrymore.

But maybe, just possibly, David will be known as

Jack's son and Shirley Jones as Jack's ex-wife.

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