

SHIRLEY PARTRIDGE RULES!

'Carousel,' schmarousel. To us, Shirley Jones will forever wear the maroon, crushed-velvet jumpsuit

By MARK VOGER
PRESS STAFF WRITER

Yes, Shirley Jones has an Oscar. Yes, she sang in prestigious, wide-screen, Technicolor musicals. Yes, she still packs 'em in when she goes out on tour.

But to anyone who is, say, age 36 or under, Shirley Jones is Shirley Partridge.

You know... in the maroon, crushed-velvet jumpsuit? Driving the psychedelic bus? Rolling her eyes at Reuben Kincaid's shortcomings? Checking behind Danny's ears?

Born in Smithtown, Pa., in 1934, Jones made her film debut in "Oklahoma!" (1955), followed by "Carousel" (1956), "April Love" (1957), "Never Steal Anything Small" (1959) and "The Music Man" (1962). Jones won the best supporting actress Oscar as evangelist Burt Lancaster's former girlfriend who becomes a prostitute in "Elmer Gantry" (1960).

In ABC-TV's "The Partridge Family" (1970-74), Jones starred as the singing mom in a fictitious pop group that put out real hit records opposite her then-stepson, David Cassidy.

"I was always kind of the 'wicked stepmother' in David's eyes," Jones says, though the two resolved their differences while working on the series. (Jones refers to David's late father, her onetime husband Jack Cassidy, as "one of the finest actors ever - and singers, by the way. Jack was a magnificent singer.")

Jones now lives in California with husband Marty Ingels, with whom she wrote the memoir, "Shirley and Marty: a Love Story."

SECTION X: A lot of us first got to know you - and will always remember you - as Shirley Partridge. We can't help it. Do you regret doing the series?

JONES: No. I don't regret it. At first, I had misgivings about doing it. In retrospect, perhaps, I would have had a longer movie career had I not done five years of television.

The work was hard, but it was a half-hour show, so it wasn't that difficult. Six months work, six months off.

I really enjoyed the five years we had. I

really did. And we had a wonderful, wonderful group. We really loved each other and enjoyed working together. But, as I say, looking back, it basically killed my movie career.

SECTION X: David Cassidy has said he would never do a "Partridge Family" reunion TV movie (SECTION X, Aug. 8). He felt it would taint our memory of the show.

JONES: I agree with him. I've never thought it was a good

idea. First of all, it's not the kind of show that lends itself to a reunion. The little kids (Brian Forster and Suzanne Crough) are no longer in the business. They haven't been for many years. Unless it would be just a whole different show, we couldn't really do a reunion.

SECTION X: Up until "Partridge," you had done a lot of singing to be sure. Suddenly, you were singing in a new genre - pop music - although you were singing mostly backup.

JONES: Yes. The music was built around David and selling records. Still, a couple of times I had my own solos - on the Christmas show and I did a thing about the whales, "The Whale's Song." Stuff like that. But it was basically teeny-bopper time.

SECTION X: When you heard about all of the trouble that Danny Bonaduce had gotten into over the years, did you ever have any maternal feelings toward him? Did you want to call him up and talk some sense into him?

JONES: I did talk to him a couple of times. But, you know, I had my own children to raise. I never took on that responsibility. I know a lot of performers - when they work with kids - do that, but I think mostly it's because they don't have their own kids. And I had my own responsibilities here, so I never really took it on.

SECTION X: Do you ever watch reruns of "The Partridge Family"?

JONES: Yeah. I love them. I really enjoy them.

SECTION X: The haircut you wore on the show really became you.

JONES: I actually did it for the show. I had long hair up to the "Partridge" time on all my movies. I had very

long hair. And then I cut it for the show and found that that was the only way I'd ever want to wear my hair again. I still have that haircut.

SECTION X: Did you feel like lightning struck twice when your son, Shaun Cassidy - David's half-brother - also became a teen idol?

JONES: Definitely. You know, Shaun said he was going to learn from David's mistakes, which he had hoped to do. But it was a tough thing for both of them. David almost gave up the business. He took a year off and just didn't do anything, and it almost ruined his head, physically and mentally. And Shaun, too, in a way. Although Shaun fared a little better because he knew all the pitfalls.

SECTION X: Let's go back to your early career. "Oklahoma!" (1955) and "Carousel" (1956) share many similarities besides your participation. They're both by Rodgers and Hammerstein, they both co-star you with Gordon MacRae, and they were both wide-screen, Technicolor musicals released virtually back-to-back. Was "Carousel" worked up as a follow-up to the success of "Oklahoma!"?

JONES: Rodgers and Hammerstein had formed their own motion picture company, and they intended to do both films, "Oklahoma!" and "Carousel." Frank Sinatra was supposed to be in "Carousel." He was supposed to play Billy Bigelow. At the last minute, he decided he didn't want to do the film for whatever his reasons - still unknown to me. But we'd rehearsed and done all the prerecordings and everything. We got to the location - Boothbay Harbor, Maine - and he pulled out.

So, they had to find Gordon. And that's how Gordon got the part.

SECTION X: It sounds as though Sinatra really inconvenienced you.

JONES: To put it mildly. Everything was done. All the rehearsals, all the costumes, everything! The first day of shooting.

SECTION X: "Elmer Gantry" (1960) is still very topical, considering all of the trouble that evangelists have gotten into in recent years.

JONES: It's very topical. It's still a great movie. Way ahead of its time. But then (director) Richard Brooks, that's how he was. Everything he did was ahead of its time. So wonderful.

SECTION X: What are your memories of Henry Fonda, whom you worked with in "The Cheyenne Social Club" (1970)?

JONES: Henry was a very private man. I got to know him better, actually, through Jimmy Stewart (who also was in "The Cheyenne Social Club"). They were close friends. I did two movies with Jimmy, so I got closer to Henry because Jimmy was on the film. Otherwise, I'm not sure I would have even gotten to know him well. Henry was well into his character and didn't want to break that.

SECTION X: A lot of us enjoyed your appearance on Howard Stern's radio show. Howard sort of put you and Marty through the ringer, but you sounded like you had a good time. You were real sports.

JONES: (Laughs) We didn't know quite what to expect, you know. Nobody had quite warned us about Howard Stern. We were in New York plugging the book and suddenly found ourselves confronted with him.

It's the first time in my entire life that my husband was quiet for a while! X



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● "Partridge" cast members David Cassidy (left), Danny Bonaduce and Shirley Jones were reunited for the first time in 19 years last July 13 in Los Angeles, on "The Arsenio Hall Show."

Partridge Family Tree



● Shirley Partridge shines in this splash page from a "Partridge Family" comic book.

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