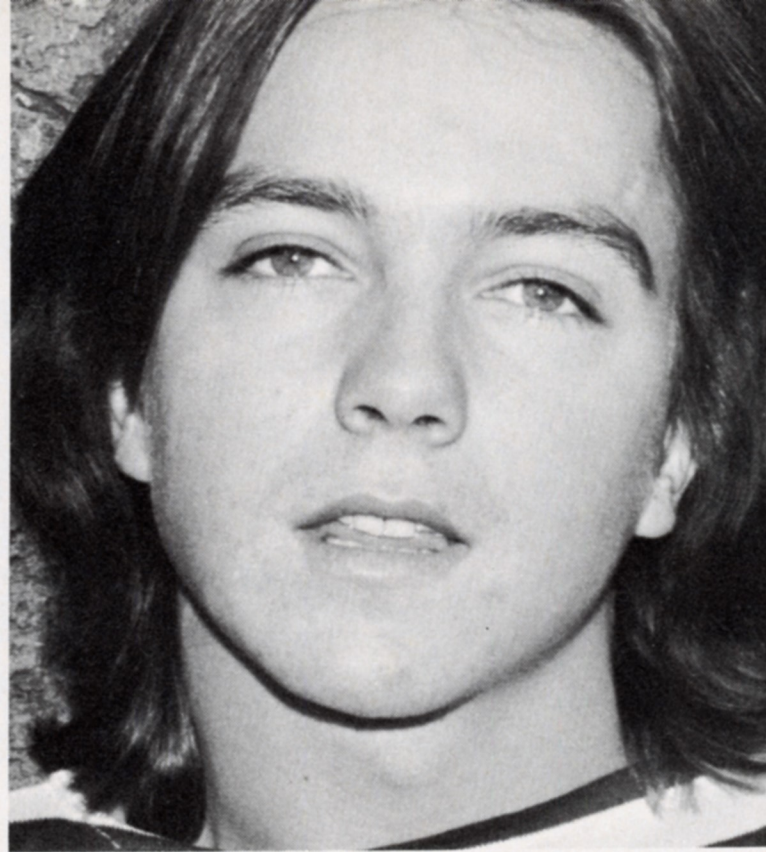


ule for the new season's shows designated for airing in September and October, had already been finished; shows were ready to roll well in advance. Before entering the hospital, David managed to act his way through eight of the weekly ABC-TV segments. His medical emergency required shelving only one planned *Partridge* chapter, and the cancellation of a three-week cross country personal appearance tour. All in all, the loss of time and elimination of engagements added up to relatively little, when compared with the chaos and utter havoc that a month away from his concert and record commitments and out of sight of the TV cameras would have meant to both his career and his bank account during practically any other four-week period in the last two years. The year to come, from all indications, promises to be the most important 12 months in David's life thus far, and if the show business masterminds are correct, it should solidify young Cassidy's status as a full-fledged superstar in the theatrical heavens. The timing of this surgical interruption seemed almost perfect . . . As a matter of fact, the only person who even noticed that the operation had been scheduled for the 13th day of the month, and who meekly acknowledged the so-called "bad-luck" traditionally associated with number 13, was the patient himself.



The surgery began and proceeded along normal patterns in a serious, though far from tense, operating room atmosphere. Contrary to the tense air that constantly hovers over most *Medical Center* or even *Marcus Welby, M.D.* operations on TV, the real life MDs use their amazing medical skills with all the swiftness and dexterity of master craftsmen in a matter-of-fact, almost casual manner.

The drama that television's medical series work so dilligently to create on screen, however, suddenly exploded into bold reality!

Without the slightest warning and without any apparent reason, David Cassidy's heartbeat stopped! The surgical team literally flew into action. They pooled their skills, their collective experience and medical know-how, creating the

human equivalent of what must have amounted to a bank of electronic computers. Several of the "normal" body processes such as basic respiration, blood flow and several other more complex internal functions had become erratic—and each developing disturbance keyed still another until the sum total of the unexpected, practically unprecedented, biological equation added up to that

one in a million—no, that one in a billion—chance that always exists in every "ordinary" medical procedure. Thanks to the combined talents of the Mt. Sinai surgical team that attended David, and the modern medical machinery available at the hospital, within moments the crises had been resolved. The patient was swiftly brought out of the grave danger which, only a decade ago, would have most likely proven fatal. The MDs removed the abnormal gallbladder from young Cassidy and, although they revealed full details of the near tragedy to Shirley Jones and Jack Cassidy, they waited until David had progressed substantially in his recovery period at Mt. Sinai before letting him in on how close he'd come to never leaving the hospital alive.

The revelation had great impact on the emotionally sensitive David. He's devoted himself to an almost endless intellectual and spiritual quest to delve deeply into whatever hidden meaning or divine message might have been attached to that incredible experience. The knowledge that his life, his very existence on earth, was for one brief minute suspended somewhere beyond the world man is capable of envisioning or understanding, has brought a greater spiritual depth to David. He's the first to admit that he doesn't understand it, not yet anyway. But he's just as fast to state emphatically that he isn't going to give up meditating on its meaning and its significance to him for as long as he lives.

By experiencing that awesome moment when death's icy breath was cold on his neck, David has learned to appreciate life all the more, and to never—ever—take small things for granted again.

—BY IRV HOLMES