

MICHAEL COLE



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late summer of 1971, during Mike's hiatus from the show, and after Paula, a singer, had completed her commitments with her parents' singing group, The Modernaires. (Paula has since left the group to become a full-time wife.)

"I wanted to get married in Carmel or in my home town in Wisconsin, but it just became too awkward," said Michael. So, instead, they chose the beautiful Wayfarers' Chapel in Palos Verdes.

"After we confirmed it at the Church, we went over to my mother's house and told her we had set the day—September 2," he continued. "There was a long silence. Then she asked us to repeat it. It turned out that that was the same date my mother and stepfather were married—and Paula and I hadn't any idea!"

It was about a year ago that Michael

began to realize how lucky he was to have such a loyal and devoted girlfriend. As he told me, at the time: "She has given me so much by her complete dedication. I got a little loose at times—went my own way—but that child was always there.

"I thank God she stood by me, because that kind of love is a supreme gift, and I really want to treat the lady right."

A month after the wedding, I asked Michael how he felt about married life. For a reply, he took my notebook and, in large, flowing handwriting, wrote the following words:

"I really don't know the difference," he wrote. "I've loved my old lady so long, I don't know the difference. It kinda seems we had a party for our loved ones on September 2. If the party was, as I felt it, festive and happy, it was simply an extension of our hearts."

Then, describing marriage, he told me: "When two people love each other, they absorb each other. The relationship is held in the middle, with one heart on one side, one on the other.

"I'm a romanticist—and I think this really works. If one starts to pull away, it's like ripping off pieces of cotton: the other can never absorb the missing feelings. You have to keep the cotton whole."

Michael has always loved children, and it's understandable that he's eager to have children with Paula.

"Aside from her beauty, dignity, grace, pride and loyalty, she's tender, soft and understanding—and her gentleness is, to me, one of her most attractive qualities.

"You can see it in the way she touches a little animal. There's tenderness, simplicity and tranquility in her eyes.

"When I look at Paula, I see my unborn child in her eyes; I see a son, I see a daughter; I see my wife, a mother.

"Children are a supreme gift and, whether we have a child of our own, or adopt, I think it's a duty that two people who are happy together, and love one another, should share this happiness with another human being, because we extend our lives into the lives of our children."

Today, Michael can look toward the future with confidence. A happily married man, he's no longer the restless, confused young bachelor, who stayed out late because he had no home. After a long day on the set, he's not interested in staying out drinking, because he knows Paula's waiting—and home is where he most wants to be. —BRENDA MARSHALL

See Michael in "The Mod Squad," Tues., 7:30 P.M., EST, ABC-Television Net.

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broke apart with the knowledge of our divorce.

"It was rough on David. He'd sit in his room and listen to his father's records; show tunes like 'Wish You Were Here.' He'd play them all by himself, over and over, for hours. It would tear me apart.

"The divorce was no one's fault. Jack and I were both so young and so busy, struggling to establish ourselves in the theatre. We had so little money that we lived with my parents, and Jack was away most of the time. David, even as a tiny tot, would mark the days until his father's return.

"As time passed, I thought he wouldn't take it so hard, but he really suffered. He was so sensitive and he worshipped his father.

"It wasn't so much that he was in need of male companionship—my father and an uncle were always around, taking David fishing, and to different sports events. But they weren't his father. I'm sure that Jack has suffered, too—and probably suffers more today, because he can't make up those years he missed with David.

"The worst times were when David would not go out to play. Instead, he would sit by the telephone, waiting for his father to call. Maybe he had heard somehow, or read in the columns, that Jack was in New York to do a play or something—any clue that a call might come, and he'd refuse to move away from the phone.

"When he was between ten and 11, I decided that the only way for father and son to get to know each other better, was for David and me to move to California. But still Jack was often away performing."

In the interim, Evelyn married Elliott Silverstein (they've since been divorced). "I was glad to have a stepfa-

ther," David said. "He never tried to take the place of my real dad. I guess I would have resented that. But he was helpful and good to me.

"I realize now that broken homes are normal facts—par for the course today," he reflected. "But it sure hurts a little kid who can't understand the adult reasons for it."

David recalled that he especially missed his father the times he was playing baseball with the Little League. The other kids had their dads out there rooting for them. When David scored, there was no excited, happy father to tell him, "Son, I'm proud of you!"

"Today Dad takes my three stepbrothers fishing, and he is with them in all of their activities. I'm their big brother, which is very nice and really great—and that's the way I had always wished it had been with Dad and me!

"As I grew up, I had to get reacquainted with my father on each new visit. There would be those long months between, and we'd come together almost like strangers—I was shy. I couldn't throw myself into his arms, asking him all the things I wanted to know. And he was trying his best to bridge the gaps between us.

"There are so many times," David explained thoughtfully, "when a child needs to turn to his dad for advice, especially during puberty, when you suddenly grow out in all directions with physical and psychological changes. Everything, at that time, seems to be happening at once, and you want to ask, and you can't ask your mother—you just can't!

"My father didn't and couldn't participate in my actual growing up, and that is what I will always miss. It stays with me. There is no blame, only me—my feeling of loss.

"After the divorce," David said, "I

soon became realistic. While some people seemed to think I was developing into a loner, that wasn't true. I loved music. And Mom took me with her when she was working in summer stock. I was always watching her. As a child, I wanted to become an actor, but Mom said no, she wasn't going to be a stage mother. She insisted I should have a normal life in a small town.

"I split when I was 18. It was okay with Mom, and Dad, too, approved. I took an apartment with Sam Hyman, a long-time school friend. Mom comes to visit, and I see Dad quite a bit now. I think he's trying even harder to make up for those years we saw so little of each other. And I'm happy now with him.

"There's no substitute for honesty with children," David observed. "They are the people in the world least willing to be fooled. I've seen it in other homes where children are living with a lie, and there is no happiness. So when parents feel divorce is the only solution, I guess that is best.

"One thing is very important: A parent, no matter how tired or busy, should always take time to listen. A child has to know he has a parent with whom he can communicate, a person who will give him direction and a sense of security. He has to have that! I know I did."

—MAY MANN

See David in "The Partridge Family," Friday, 8:30 P.M., EST, ABC-TV Net.

