

# THE LUCK OF SUSAN DEY



## the girl who's so close to David!

You'd give anything to take her place, even for a day, wouldn't you? To be able to spend your time with him, work with him, chat and munch hamburgers together, even touch him. So how did this bright-eyed girl become part of the Partridge Family... how did she get so close to darling David? Writer Henry Gris found out specially for you. . . .

IT'S one of those things that never ever happens in real life. At least, not until it happened to Susan Dey and her dreams actually came true!

Susan was studying hard for her high school graduation exams in Mount Kisco, New York, when a Hollywood talent scout spotted her. Until then, Susan had been working on the fringes of show business as a junior model. Not that Susan was so interested in becoming a full-time model; she was already dreaming of an acting career, and the money she was earning as a model she was saving to pay for acting classes. But first Susan had to graduate from high school.

Her father, Robert Smith Dey, city editor of the New Rochelle Standard-Star, would have loved Susan to carry on with her studies and go on to college.

But things happened so fast that Susan didn't even get a chance to sit for her exams. She completed her courses through the post and her diploma was sent to her in Hollywood while she was making her professional acting debut in "The Partridge Family."

"They simply told me I had a job and mother and I flew out to Hollywood," Susan recalled, wide-eyed as if she still couldn't believe it had all actually happened! "We arrived and they put me to work in the sample episode of the series, they call it a "pilot" episode. I was so scared I couldn't look Jerry Paris, the director, in the eye."

Susan had been cast as the oldest daughter of the widowed Shirley Partridge, who was bringing up five children. The family formed a popular rock group with David (who, as you know is Shirley Partridge's real-life step son) as Susan's older brother. And that's how it all began. . . .

"The point is," Susan says, "my TV Mum Shirley Jones, is a celebrated actress. All the other kids had acting experience. I had none, unless you count my work in a local drama club. I had done a couple of television commercials, and modelled for magazines such as Seventeen, American Girl and Simplicity. . . . My next step *should* have been drama school. Instead I found myself filming a series watched every week by some 30,000,000 people!"

Success came quickly for Susan because within two months of the "pilot" being filmed, the series was sold. So Susan was back in front of the cameras with no time for acting lessons.

"I had to learn by watching the others on the set, and then watching and criticising myself on the screen."

Her most important teacher was Shirley. "Watching her work was like taking acting lessons every day," Susan said. . . . and working with people like David made her

really try to do her best — who wouldn't?

Gradually Susan settled down and began to enjoy acting. She wasn't afraid of the director any more. "Now I had fun while acting," she said.

Her biggest help, however, was watching herself every week on the TV screen.

"It was hard to do, and I really was in agony over some of the things I did on the screen, but that was the only way I could see my mistakes."

Susan's success as an actress in her first year as part of the Partridges has been rewarded by the producers — they've centred several programmes around her.

"My favourite is the story dealing with my attempt to give self-confidence to a shy, awkward boy. I felt I was really creatively acting. It was a wonderful experience."

Susan didn't mention it, but another morale booster was the day she shared the famous Photoplay award for the most promising new stars of the year with David.

Since then David, and the Partridge family, have skyrocketed to fame. And Susan enjoys that fame, too. Thousands of fans write to her every week and when they recognize her in the street, she's besieged by autograph hunters. To avoid the spotlight, Susan came on holiday to Europe. She was told that the series was not shown in Spain — so she and mother travelled to Spain. Then they toured France, England and Scotland, in the hope that they would not be recognized. They were. "But people in England are so much more polite than in America," Susan said. We had a glorious time, and I learned a lot." At 19, Susan has tasted success and fame. She's still a bit scared, but thinks she's ready for most things. With two exceptions — autograph hunters and inquisitive reporters. "They still frighten me."