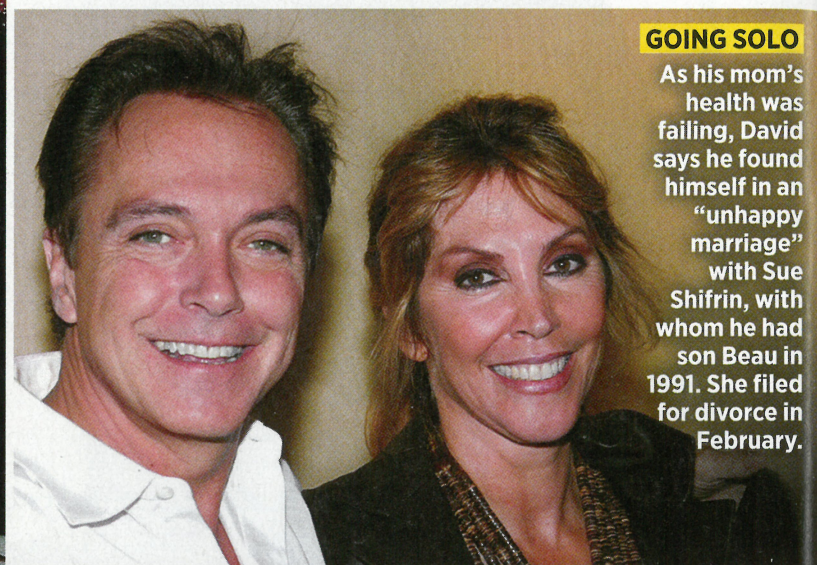




## DEVOTED SON

"Seeing such a vibrant woman reduced to this is really just heartbreaking," David said during his mom's battle with Alzheimer's-related dementia.

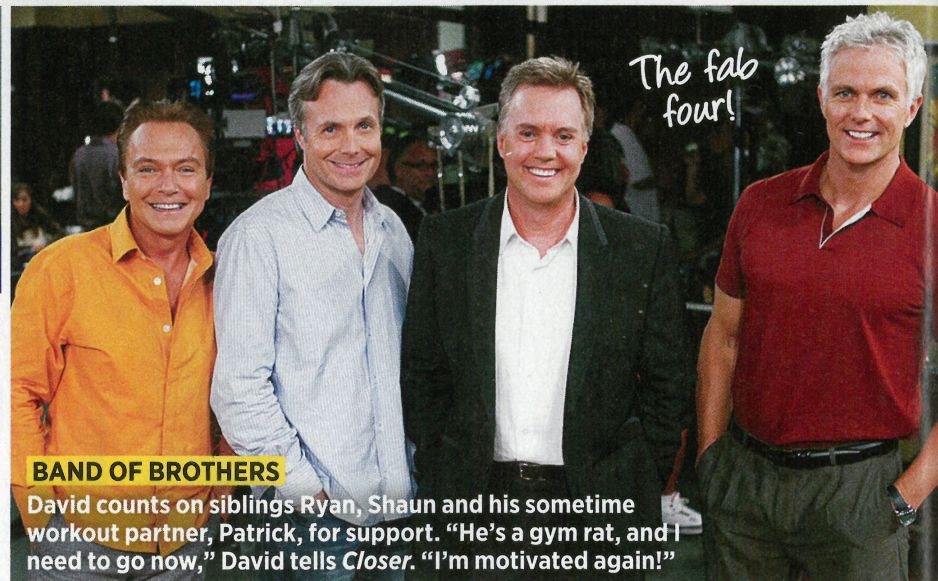


## GOING SOLO

As his mom's health was failing, David says he found himself in an "unhappy marriage" with Sue Shifrin, with whom he had son Beau in 1991. She filed for divorce in February.

## FACING THE TRUTH

David, here in his August mug shot, had three DUI arrests in less than three years. "I was in denial, like most of us are," he tells *Closer*.



## BAND OF BROTHERS

David counts on siblings Ryan, Shaun and his sometime workout partner, Patrick, for support. "He's a gym rat, and I need to go now," David tells *Closer*. "I'm motivated again!"

**"When I see alcohol now, I want to gag. It's cancer to me. It's poison."**

flagged by police. "No excuses; it was just stupid," admits David. Upon failing a sobriety test, he was taken to South Central LA jail, which is when he really hit rock bottom. "I spent the night in my own cell so that I wouldn't be exposed to a lot of the [scary] stuff going on in there," David tells *Closer* of his harrowing ordeal. "It was humiliating and embarrassing. You feel guilt," he shares.

The guilt and fear just may have saved his life. "I know now that if I continued to drink the way I was, I would die within two, three years," the singer says of his brutal — but

much needed — wake-up call. "I would die emotionally and physically. I'd just be a sad, lonely drunk, and that's a horrible and frightening nightmarish picture."

To get that vision out of his head, he was determined to make a change. "There's no going back; I can't ever have another drink," says David, who made a promise to fans — and himself — that he would remain in treatment for as long as necessary. Attorney Robert Miller, a DUI specialist at Robert Miller & Associates who isn't handling David's case, tells *Closer* that his commitment to getting better could even help his legal affairs. "Rehab gets him day-for-day credit toward any jail sentence," he notes. If David is later sentenced to prison, "he

would be able to apply those credits and perhaps serve no jail time at all."

## HOW IT BEGAN

David may be spared prison time, but there's no escaping another horror: the painful memories of his mother's final years that first brought him to his knees. "I wasn't a drinker for decades," David insists. "I had all kinds of alcohol in my house, but I never took a sip of it." But when his mother, Broadway star Evelyn Ward, started succumbing to her dementia around 2005, he sought comfort in the bottle. "My mom got really ill," explains David, "and I was her sole caretaker. She was disappearing, and in her last five years she wasn't able to walk, talk or feed herself. It hit me hard."

**"I'm not ashamed of me, but I'm ashamed of my behavior when I was drinking. Because I wasn't me."**

Alcohol became a convenient crutch. In December 2012, as David's mother neared death, "I started drinking to go and see her because I couldn't handle it," he confesses. "I'd just get sober enough to drive over. I'd buy a bottle of liquor, drive to her place and drink half a bottle of alcohol in the parking lot, go in, spend hours, get sober and come back out. Her last week I was basically drinking 24 hours a day, and I held her hand as she died on December 23." But David made sure he was sober when his mom's final moments came. "The better part of me said, 'Let's not be drunk when this is happening,'" he recalls.

Meanwhile, David's life back home was falling apart and he had no one to turn to. His 23-year marriage to wife Sue Shifrin was crumbling, and he was struggling with an empty nest. "My son [Beau, 23] was leaving me and becoming a young man," he says. "It all hit at the same time. I went into isolation. I would buy alcohol and go into my room. It was just very, very difficult," David tells *Closer*. "I felt very lost."

## FINDING HIS WAY BACK

There was a light waiting for David at the end of this dark tunnel. He and Sue agreed to end their long-fading marriage, and he has found love again with girlfriend Maura, 52, a blond interior designer. On hand for David's Mohegan Sun concert, "she was definitely more like a supportive partner than a young groupie or trophy wife," one onlooker reports. And David is eternally grateful. "She's just become like my rock. She was never judgmental; that was No. 1 for me," he raves to *Closer*.

Maura is the farthest thing from an enabler, he adds. She asked David, "How long are you going to contin-

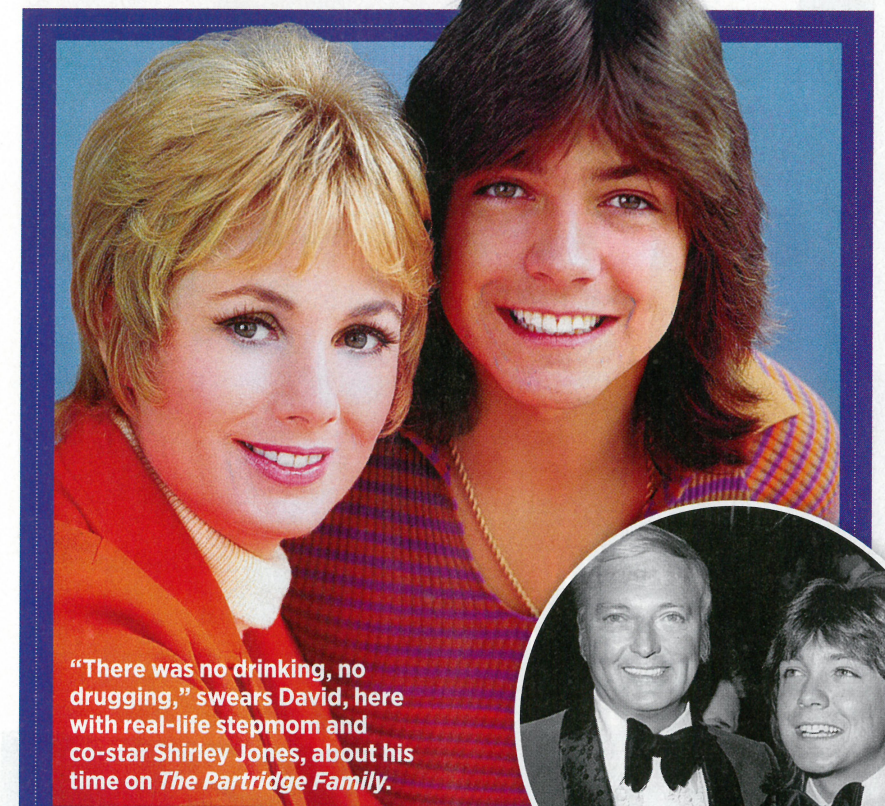
ue to drink? Because I don't want to see you kill yourself," he shares of her firm ultimatum.

Maura's tough love seems to be working, and David has resolved to get and stay better. He's deeply involved in an intensive outpatient program and individual counseling. (AA didn't work because "I wasn't anon-

ymous. People would ask, 'Would you call my sister and wish her happy birthday?') But he does lean heavily on a sponsor. "I speak with him every day," David says. "He's an incredible guy."

David's finally feeling good about himself, too. "I smile when I see myself in the mirror. I don't remember doing that when I was drinking," he shares with *Closer*. "Now I think, 'What am I gonna look like in 10 years?' Because I'm going to be here in 10 years. And that's a beautiful thing."

—Reporting by Corynne Cirilli



"There was no drinking, no drugging," swears David, here with real-life stepmom and co-star Shirley Jones, about his time on *The Partridge Family*.

## HIS FAMILY'S CURSE

David doesn't blame his four years as a *Partridge Family* teen idol for his problems. "I would've been an alcoholic in any profession," he insists, revealing that the disease runs on both sides of his family and goes back several generations. In fact, his father — stage, film and TV actor Jack Cassidy — was an alcoholic who died tragically in 1976 at the age of 49 when a fire started after he reportedly fell asleep with a cigarette after a night of drinking. David says his dad was a brilliant but troubled man who uneasily lived in the shadow of his more famous second wife. "It became very hard for him. He was Mr. Shirley Jones, and then he became David Cassidy's father. He was arguably the most talented human being I've ever met," David tells *Closer*. "But I'm the one who found the fame and I'm the one who really sent him over the edge."



David and dad Jack at the Grammys in 1971.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF DAVID CASSIDY; GETTY (2); GLOBE; KAREN NEAL; GETTY