

Star Readies Series With Sunny Outlook

By NEVART APIKIAN

COLUMBIA RANCH (Calif.)

— Shirley Jones is back in musicals again as the mother of five children in "The Partridge Family," a new ABC-TV show opening Sept. 25.

One reason she took the series, she said, is that she has "three growing boys and a husband (Jack Cassidy)" and with a series she could stay home and "be with my family."

Looking every bit as young and pretty as Laurie of "Oklahoma!" and the librarian of "The Music Man," Miss Jones admitted that there are "swinging looking mothers these days."

On the set at the Columbia Ranch the first thing we saw was the psychedelic-painted bus in which the Partridge family of musicians rides.

"I never drove a shift car and they gave me a bus," she said. (The sign on the back says "Careful — Nervous mother driving.")

On the set she was doing a scene with 10-year-old (going on 40) Danny Bonaduce — the red-haired financial wizard and con artist of the family. He's the one who has sold the record the family cut in their garage — the last minute substituting their mother (Miss Jones) as lead singer.

Incidentally, she's the only one who really sings in the show, plus her stepson, David Cassidy who plays her musically inclined and electronically wired son, Keith.

"We've done eight songs already," said Miss Jones, later in a dressing room luncheon interview in which she relaxed in a pale green robe eating pink low-cal strawberry yogurt.

"We're a soft rock and roll group, something like the Fifth Dimension sound. They've cut a new record, 'Shirley Jones and the Partridge Family,' which should come out just about the time the show goes on the air.

"Musically, the songs are very intricate," she explained. "I'm used to being a lead singer — a soprano — and it's difficult to sing with a group. And I've never had to sing harmonies. None of

the children — except David — sings. We dub them in," she said.

As for keeping the family in line, this mother uses the lines: "I'm bigger than you are and that's why you're going to do what I say."

It's the same at home. I tell my boys, "I've lived longer than you and I know a little more."

"I love the show because it is a musical and I'm in show business. I'm not the ordinary housewife and I can go anywhere. We'll be going more on location. One show is set in Las Vegas, another will be in a prison (set) and later we may actually be traveling to other cities."

She said there's no special romance planned for her in the show, but in one episode she meets an old boyfriend. However, the children discourage any romance, saying, "Mother, he's a lawyer and you're a star and you know these mixed marriages don't work."

Dave Madden of "Laugh-In" plays the Partridge family's manager but this is a platonic relationship.

Back on the set Madden recalled playing Three Rivers Inn.

"I'm always looking at the scripts to see if I can be written off," he said. "I'm the dispensable one. What makes me more insecure is that they've placed my name on with Scotch Tape on my chair."

An older daughter in the Partridge Family is played by a former fashion model from Mt. Kisco, Susan Dey, who is making her TV debut.

Though a mother of five on TV, this week Miss Jones is quite alone since her two oldest boys are at camp and her youngest, 4, is off to Mexico with his nurse on vacation. Her husband is on tour with the show, "I Do, I Do."

"When I go on a promotion tour to Pittsburgh, Jack will be playing Columbus and I'll take a weekend off and see him," she said.