

Shirley will never wear an apron

By VERNON SCOTT

HOLLYWOOD (UPI)—

Motherhood for almost all eternity, right up through George Jessel's last rendition of "My Mother's Eyes," has pictured dear old mom in a shawl, rocking chair or washing dishes.

Shirley Jones in "The Partridge Family" is a blessed exception.

"I've never worn an apron on the show and I never will," said the beautiful blonde who plays mother to five musical kids each week.

She plays mother to three of her own at home.

"Mother is no longer a little old lady baking biscuits," Shirley went on. "Even grandmothers don't go that route anymore. So I stay out of the kitchen as much as possible on the show. At home, too."

Shirley came to Hollywood in 1954 to star in the movie

version of "Oklahoma!" she was a beautiful youngster still pink-cheeked and padded with baby fat.

Today she is svelte, considerably more beautiful than before and possessed of a subdued sex appeal.

As Shirley Partridge, she would look good in a pear tree or anywhere else—even the kitchen—the producers of the ABC series might decide to put her.

Originally they conceived Mother Partridge as the stereotyped long suffering, but understanding, matriarch.

But after contracts were signed and scripts were scrutinized it became apparent that Shirley wasn't ready for crocheting antimacassars or rattling tea cups. "The role I play is not a great deal different from my own personality," Shirley said. "I told

the producers I didn't want to get away from my conception of motherhood.

"I have a wonderful rapport with my three youngsters. I don't pat them on the head and talk down to them. And I didn't want to portray that sort of mother on the air. It is, after all, unrealistic. Once a woman becomes a mother she doesn't automatically become a saint."

Does George Jessel know this?

While Shirley may not be a saint, she has the patience of one, working with so many children and managing to hold her own.

Behind the scenes Shirley is the real life Stepmother of David Cassidy, the handsome young lead singer of the show who has created a raging storm of idolatry among kids from playpens to campus.

There is a respect and affection between 21-year-old David and Shirley that is unique and warm in hard hearted Hollywood.

"David agrees with the kind of mother I play on the show," she said. "My own kids ask every now and then why I don't look more like a mom."

"But who's to say what a mother looks like these days? The Ann Harding or Dame May Whitty picture just doesn't exist anymore."

Except, perhaps, in George Jessel's big blue eyes.

Bit Parts: Gwen Verdon will make her first dramatic Broadway appearance in "Children, Children," for producer Arthur Whiteley. ... Gregory Peck, who has two production companies for movies, plans to form a third for a new film in which he will star ... Angel Tompkins played guest star roles back-to-back in "Ironside" and "Love, American Style"