



MYSTERY SHROUDS JEFFREY HUNTER'S DEATH

Emily McLaughlin Overcome By Grief

□ An air of mystery shrouded the death of Jeff Hunter last May. The mystery may never be solved. The 42-year-old actor, best known for his portrayal of Christ in the movie epic, *King of Kings*, was found unconscious on the floor of his home the afternoon of May 26. A fire department emergency ambulance rushed him to a nearby hospital, where brain surgery was performed. But he never regained consciousness. Jeff Hunter died at 9:30 A.M., Tuesday, May 27, 1969.

No one knows for sure what really happened during the last moments of Jeff Hunter's conscious life.

His bride of three months, Daytime TV star Emily McLaughlin, his friends, doctors . . . everybody connected with the tragedy could only guess at what might have been ... based on the few available facts:

(Please turn to page 55)



Left, Family friends help a stricken Emily leave the church. Jeff's closest friends were pallbearers, right. It was a day of tragedy and memories for all.



EMILY McLAUGHLIN- JEFFREY HUNTER

(Continued from page 6)

Around 4 P.M., Monday May 26, actor Frank Bellow, a friend of Jeff's dropped by the Hunter home for a visit. Reportedly, he found Jeff lying unconscious at the foot of a staircase. When attempts to revive Jeff failed, Bellow placed a frantic call to Emily, at ABC-TV studios in Hollywood. She co-stars as Nurse Jessie Brewer on *General Hospital*.

Emily rushed home, took in the situation and phoned for the fire department emergency ambulance. She told doctors investigating authorities that Jeff had been suffering dizzy spells ever since he got back from a movie role in Spain. He had been briefly hospitalized and pronounced okay. But the pain and dizziness sporadically persisted.

From this, police theorized that Jeff had been stricken with a dizzy spell

at the top of the steps, stumbled and fallen, knocking over a planter and striking his head.

An autopsy was performed the following afternoon, but the results were "inconclusive." It was found that Jeff had sustained a fracture at the base of his skull and another fracture in the forehead area. The chief medical examiner's bulletin listed Cause of Death as, "brain injury by blunt force trauma to the head. Injury is compatible with a fall," but there is no way of ever proving this is what happened.

Emily was in shock and under heavy sedation in the days following her husband's death. Her doctor kept her in seclusion, refusing to even let her talk with close friends.

Jeff and Emily were married for only three months. Theirs had been a storybook whirlwind romance. But on that balmy May afternoon, Jeff Hunter's luck abruptly ran out. In keeping with the "script" of the past few months, his final fadeout was as intensely dramatic as any of his cinematic roles. And when time dimmed the shock of his passing to a dull pain, his loved ones, his friends and a legion of fans were left with a lot of memories . . . and a lot of unanswered questions.

by LEE STEVENS