



One month after they met, Emily McLaughlin and Jeffrey Hunter eloped to Mexico.

# THE WEDDING THAT SHOCKED HOLLYWOOD



Her "ex" wished her happiness...



his "ex" had a few things to say about money!

\* When it comes to news of romance, marriage and divorce, Hollywood has long been a town that is completely unshakable. The blase citizens of film and TV land are never shocked by anything—ranging from the December-June affair of Frank Sinatra and Mia Farrow to Judy Garland's recent taking of a fifth husband, Mickey Deans, who's a dozen years her junior. But when news of the Juarez, Mexico, merger of Emily McLaughlin to Jeffrey Hunter spread around town, eyebrows lifted. For once

the community where everyone claims to "be in the know" was completely taken off guard.

The elopement of Emily, who's in ABC TV's *General Hospital*, and Jeff, who played the title role in the short-lived *Temple Houston* series and has since returned to concentrating on the big screen, caused more comment than many marriages of the very top stars. Why so many gasps of surprise? One actress who knows them both explained it: "Because not even their closest friends knew they were dating. And if they had, no one would have expected this. Em and Jeff are both such 'solid-citizen' type characters that they would be the very last people anyone would have expected to do such a thing!"

The actress was not alone in her feelings. It seemed completely out of character for the pair. Even Emily admitted on her return from a four-day South of the Border honeymoon, "Frankly, it was a move not at all in my plans. I hadn't expected to remarry for a long time. But Jeff and I are in love and we saw no reason at this point in our lives to do things in a 'formal' manner. I'm basically the type who likes a home and roots. So is Jeff. We feel certain we can be happy together."

Emily went on to say that she and Jeff had known each other for less than a

month. "But," she added, "we're not children. We both know ourselves well enough to know what we want."

It is a second marriage for Emily, a third for Jeffrey. Em's first husband was Robert Lansing, and that union terminated about a year ago. Emily kept hoping for a reconciliation, but when prospects for it looked bleak, she filed for divorce. Her California decree was not even final when she and Jeff made their decision. The first person they contacted was Lansing, who agreed to sign papers granting Emily permission to get a quickie Mexican divorce, paving the way for her marriage the same day. If Bob was jolted by Emily's decision, he didn't indicate it to friends.

"I wish them both the best of everything," Bob told a friend. "Emily is a fine person and she deserves happiness." Bob and Emily were married for 12 years and have an 11-year-old son, Robert Jr. In addition to the fact he harbors no ill feelings toward his "ex," Lansing had other good reasons to help Emily and Jeff speed up the wedding. When Emily traded the name Lansing for Hunter, Bob was released from a healthy monthly alimony payment.

Dusty Bartlett, the most recent "ex" Mrs. Hunter, didn't react so happily toward the news, even though Jeff had written her a note indicating his

intentions. She told a Hollywood columnist that Hunter was almost a year behind in child support, adding that Jeff had spent Christmas day with their three boys. "He asked me to remarry him in December, but I refused," she said.



**Sally Ann Howes accepted Jeff's ring last year—then dodged merger with "Why spoil a beautiful friendship!"**

Dusty's statement really sent tongues wagging, because even Jeff's closest pals didn't suspect he was the least bit interested in another try with her. Jeff had been romancing Sally Ann Howes for a year and their love affair had ended only in November. Had these two suddenly patched things up and eloped, no one would have been surprised. Sally Ann also received a note from Jeff explaining he wanted her to know about Emily "before she read it in the papers." Sally's reported comment was: "Well, I guess when the urge to merge hits you, you should marry. I hope they'll be happy."

Jeff had wanted Sally to marry him while both were film locationing in Europe last summer. Though she said she was in love with Jeff, Sally apparently had reservations about matrimony. She said on several occasions, "Jeff and I get along so well. Why spoil a beautiful friendship by getting married?"

As of this writing, Barbara Rush, Jeff's first wife, has made no comment. Barbara and Jeff were married December 1, 1950, six months after they met. Between their two contracts they earned a comfortable living. Neither had any professional theatrical experience but had been signed to movie contracts directly from their work in college productions. Both had led comparatively charmed

lives—no real struggles, illnesses, or problems.

The conflict came *after* their marriage. They were constantly separated by their careers. While Jeff was on location in one part of the country, Barbara would be back in Hollywood before the camera. Barbara finally called it quits when she was in Ireland on a film and Jeff was in Mexico. Since they almost never saw each other, it seemed pointless to go on. A son, Christopher, was born August 29, 1952. Since his parents' 1954 divorce, he has been living with his mother.

Barbara and Jeff remained friendly over the years and when she married press agent Warren Cowan (they recently separated, too) Jeff sent his congratulations. At the time Barbara and Jeff parted, he had said, "Oh, yes, I'll get married again, definitely. But I don't want to combine careers and marriage. It didn't work once for me, and I doubt if it could again." Perhaps it was because of his first marital failure that Jeff chose a non-pro for his second bride. Dusty Bartlett was a young divorcee who was introduced to him by Robert Wagner. They dated for well over a year before discussing marriage because, as Jeff put it, "I only knew Barbara for six months and perhaps that wasn't long enough."

Except that both were brunettes, Barbara and Dusty were almost complete

opposites. When that marriage failed, too, friends believed it was also because of career problems. Jeff's perennially youthful face kept him from getting more mature parts, yet he was too old for typical juveniles. For Jeff, who'd been brought up in an upper-middle-class family, who'd been a big man on campus throughout his school years and who'd attained his film career without much effort, failure of any kind was hard to take. When his Fox contract terminated, Jeff had a few good roles. One of the best was in John Ford's *The Searchers*. But Hollywood was at its lowest ebb at that time, in a panic because of the rapidly spreading influence of TV. So Jeff turned to "the opposition," packaging and producing *Temple Houston* for television. Unfortunately, it lasted only one season. When offers came from Europe, Jeff took them.

Since Jeff has spent a great deal of time on the Continent the last two years, he has not seen much of his sons. His boys by Dusty are Todd, 9; Scott, 6; and Steele, 16, Dusty's son by a prior husband but legally adopted by Jeff and bearing his name.

Many of Jeff's friends believe that if Dusty had accompanied him on locations an estrangement would never have occurred. But, like so many other wives of actors, she remained in California with

the children. These same friends now wonder how Jeff and his new bride will cope with the situation. While Emily is not an actress burning with ambition, nor one on the "glamour" scale of Barbara Rush, she nevertheless enjoys her work. It doesn't seem likely she will give it up.

The new bride merely laughs the possible problem off. "I know our marriage came as a shock to a lot of people, but they'll get used to it. In three weeks you can do a lot of talking and get to really know a person if you want to. There will be adjustments to make, arrangements to work out, problems that will come up. That is what marriage is. That is what life is, even if you're single."

Personality-wise, Emily bears little resemblance to either of Jeff's former wives. Barbara is the cool sophisticated type. Dusty is a sportswoman, adept at skiing and horseback riding. Emily is more the intellectual type: Most of her friends are from earlier days in New York, when she appeared on Broadway.

On the other hand, Jeff bears little similarity to Robert Lansing, either in background or individual characteristics. Lansing is strictly a self-made man who had many struggles before attaining success. At the age of 9 he joined a tent show in Texas and, with his parents' permission, traveled with it for several months. At that time he made up his

mind that someday he'd be an actor. His mother died when he was 16, leaving him with a rootless feeling. So, he took to the road via the "thumb route" until he entered the army.

Back in mufti two years later, Bob set out to pursue his acting ambitions. He studied at the American Theatre Wing under the G.I. Bill. When he graduated, he borrowed money from a friend so he could join the Screen Actors Guild and accept his first professional role, a small part in *Saint Benny The Dip*. Compared to Jeff, who was signed to a movie contract directly from his theatrical experiences at U.C.L.A., Lansing didn't have an easy time getting himself established as an actor. Emily used to say that one of the things that she admired most about Robert was the fact he had overcome every obstacle to attain success.

Emily met Bob when both were on tour with *The Lovers*, a play that turned out to be a flop from a box-office standpoint, but a "romantic" success for the couple. They were on a pre-Broadway tour and, as Emily once explained: "I fell in love with Bob in about 15 minutes. We were married nine weeks later. The only thing that delayed the ceremony that long was the fact my parents wanted it held in White Plains, New York, in the same church where they had met while singing

in the choir, later been married, and where I'd been baptized."

Her New England family stretches back to the Mayflower. Bob always jokingly said, "My forebears are all from Arkansas. But they've been there so many generations, I'm sure it was before the Mayflower."

Like Bob, Emily made up her mind as a child that she would have an acting career. Her parents agreed, but only on the condition she got a college degree first. After graduating from Middlebury College, Emily headed for New York and two years at the Neighborhood Playhouse. Before she met Bob she had been in several off-Broadway shows. The Lansing marriage survived many early struggles. Both took work outside the theater in order to meet expenses of their cold-water flat. Finally, Bob began getting good TV roles, also Broadway parts, and Emily became Dr. Eileen Seaton on the *Young Dr. Malone* soap opera. In 1963, the couple decided to head West, since most of the activity was moving to Hollywood. Bob became the star of *87th Precinct*, a TV series, and Emily began guest-starring before landing her part on *General Hospital*. They seemed a perfectly-matched couple.

Trouble between the Lansings began to brew when Bob went to Europe for *The Man Who Never Was* series. Shortly

after, his co-star—Dana Wynter—announced she was estranged from her husband, lawyer Greg Bautzer. Then, a few months later, after Bob returned to Hollywood, he and Emily announced their separation. Emily had visited him once on the German location (she was temporarily "written out" of *General Hospital*), but, as in the case of Jeff's two marriages, it would appear that absences caused by career also broke up Emily's seemingly happy household. Yet, in spite of their previous marital mishaps, Emily and Jeff have no fears of the future and feel sure their decision to marry is right.

Emily points out that they have much in common. Both like to read, like modern music, enjoy swimming, and love children and animals. Emily will not give up her career because, as she puts it, "acting is as important to me as breathing.

"And I don't know why my friends should have been surprised at my marrying Jeff so soon after our meeting," laughs Emily. "After all, I fell in love with Bob fast, too. Of course I'm older now and there were many more things to consider—like my son, and Jeff's boys. But we feel that happy parents make for happy children. I'm sure they will adjust.

"For myself, I can't imagine marrying anyone but an actor. Who else would understand all of the problems involved

in an acting career? A good actor must have patience and understanding or he doesn't survive. Jeff has them. Bob had them, too. Our marriage did not break up because he lacked those qualities. As for Jeff, he is about the kindest human being I've ever met, and that means a great deal in a marriage. At least it does to me."

—BEATRICE EMMONS