

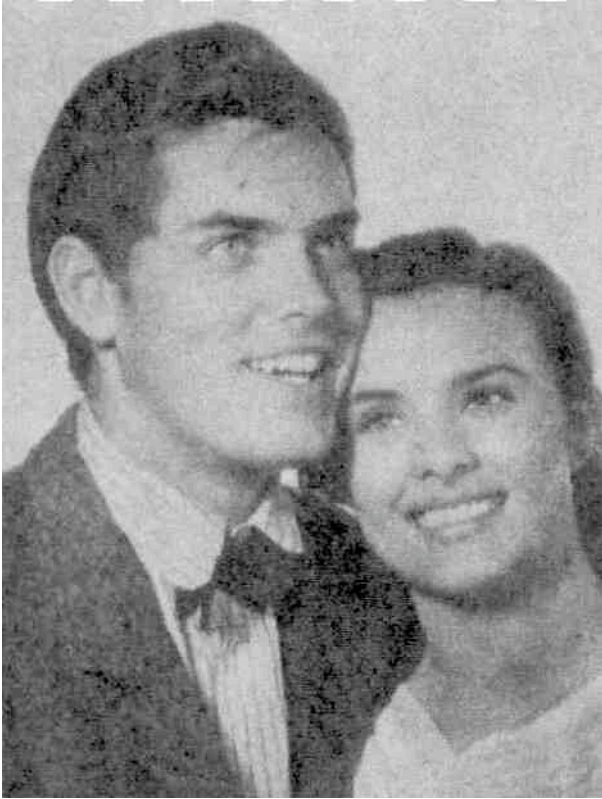
YOUNG

BIG THINGS ARE
HAPPENING TO NEW
STAR JEFFREY HUNTER

Jeffrey Hunter's landing one big role after another now. He and Anne Francis are the romance team in "Dreamboat."

MAN WITH A FUTURE

BY MIRIAM ROGERS



Jean Peters, has the co-starring role with Jeff in "Cry of the Swamp," which was made on location in Florida.



In "Belles on Their Toes," he's with Jeanne Crain. He was with her before in "Take Care of My Little Girl."

He plucked his name out of the blue one day, while walking across the 20th Century-Fox lot in response to a request from the higher-ups. Apparently they did not think his own name, Henry H. McKinnies, Jr. was suited to a movie marquee. For some time thereafter, you could call "Jeff" or "Hey, Hunter!" after him, and get no response. The new name was hard to get used to. But so was it hard to get used to the idea that he was actually a movie actor!

It had all happened so suddenly, and it was so unpremeditated—the movie part, that is. Jeff had always been interested in acting, was preparing himself for a career along those lines as assiduously and intelligently as he knew how, but it was radio, not the movies, that appealed to him. He had definite ideas as to what he wanted, where he was going. He was, in fact, doing graduate work at U.C.L.A., working for his master's degree, and desirous, he explains, of "developing skill in acting, but also in, all other phases of radio work."

He was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, but grew up in Milwaukee and for him, it proved a city of opportunity. Although he excelled at sports and also in his studies, he found time during his school years for the theatre. His first

appearance on the stage, in the Children's Theatre, led to subsequent roles, and about the same time, he also appeared on the Children's Theatre of the Air.

During his high school years, he made his professional debut, playing a G.I. on a radio program called *Those Who Serve*.

"It was small-town stuff," Jeff admitted, "but it was exciting, just the same, to be on a radio program—and to be paid for it!"

In college—he went to Northwestern University, graduating in '49—he majored in speech and radio, and appeared in many college productions. But of all his experience on the stage, he looks back most fondly on a season of summer stock. His dramatic teacher took a carefully selected group, and put on shows in a theatre she owned, called the Players' Lodge.

"We did absolutely everything," Jeff told me. "made the costumes and the scenery, wrote the advertising, and of course acted! We got a chance to play all kinds of parts; it was invaluable experience, and most enjoyable.

"That is what I enjoy most, actually," he went on, "char-
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acter parts. And that is what I like most about radio—you are not limited by what you look like!"

It is hard to imagine Jeff being "limited" by his looks — he is six foot one, dark-haired, blue-eyed, and undeniably handsome. He reminds me of Ty Power, in the early days of his movie career, and has much of the same charm. But of course I knew what he meant: you can do all kinds of tricks on the radio with a flexible voice, but a handsome young man can't very well play a hard-bitten

Humphrey Bogart type on the screen, and get away with it. However, Jeffrey has had very good luck so far in his screen career; his parts have been varied, he has played both meanies and good guys, and had a chance to reveal genuine acting ability and versatility.

"The thing I like about pictures," Jeff continued, "is that the screen combines the intimacy of radio with visual acting, and it is more flexible than the stage. Movies take you more places, give you wider scope—"

But how did all this happen?

Still absorbed in his plans for a radio career, young Henry McKinnies, Jr.—better known as Hank—decided to continue his studies at U.C.L.A. If he had had any idea of finding radio work during this time, he soon gave it up.

"Hunting for that sort of job is time-consuming—to make the rounds, and beat on producers' doors takes just too much time. It was more important for me to get my Master's degree, *then* look for a job. I did have the opportunity of working on radio in the college studio, though—we put on an educational series, and drama programs. In fact, my studies included acting as well as radio producing and writing. And we put on a show—"

It was this show, *All My Sons*, which was to change Jeff's life, his plans, his very name. A Paramount scout saw him, and he was promptly tested. The test was good, but no contract could be signed until the studio's "head man" returned. Jeff cooled his heels.

One Saturday night, his agent, who is Viennese, called him. "Honk," he said, ("That's what he calls me," Jeff laughed.) "Honk—I've got bad news."

For a week, Jeff or Hank—tried to adjust himself to the bad news. It was pretty hard to take, to have a movie career thrust into your hands, and as suddenly snatched away. Then, on the very next Saturday night, the phone rang again. "Honk," said a familiar voice. "I've got *good* news!"

The good news was that his test made for Paramount, had been seen, and liked, at 20th Century-Fox. A couple of days later, Jeff was on his way to New York, to appear in *Fourteen Hours*, still slightly bemused by the suddenness of it all, almost equally thrilled to be working in a movie, and to see New York for the first time.

Back in Hollywood, he went into *Call Me Mister*, then into *My Little Girl*. On the first day of shooting, he was told that he would not have to work the next day, so that night he went to a football game, and shouted himself hoarse. At eight the next morning, he was called in to the studio — for a love scene with Jeanne Crain.

Jeff's eyes twinkled. "I took her in my arms, I kissed her—then, all of a sudden, it came over me: *This is Jeanne Crain—what are you doing here?* It was the most unreal experience; Yes," he concluded with a sigh, "that was quite a day!"

But something else had happened in connection with his Paramount adventure—he had met a girl. A very pretty brunette named Barbara Rush. Barbara wanted to make his test with him, but she had to leave for Riverside, for a picture with Charles Boyer. Then,

Jeff was off for New York, and *Fourteen Hours*. But he did not forget Barbara. Once back in Hollywood, he quickly looked her up, and they began going together with increasing frequency and they were married.

They had two weeks together — "two very hectic weeks" — and then Jeffrey took off for the West Indies. That was the first of many separations. More recently, while Jeff was working on *Red Skies of Montana*, his first co-starring part, and in *Belles on Their Toes*, in which he again romances Jeanne Crain, Barbara was playing in summer stock, in Arden, Delaware. But now *she* is home, they have found an apartment in Westwood, and both hope the separations are over.

These are two serious-minded people; both are ambitious, want to improve their acting. At this writing, Jeff's career is going ahead by leaps and bounds, while Barbara, as one of Paramount's Golden Circle, has not had as good breaks as she might have. But the breaks will come. What matters most is that they are going ahead together!