

## Jeff Chandler

Born Ira Grossel in Brooklyn, New York in 1918, Chandler discovered an interest in drama while attending famed Erasmus Hall High School, an environment in which he was immersed in an atmosphere of artistic attainment.

Contemporaries included future noteworthies such as songwriter Betty Comden, actors Susan Hayward and Eli Wallach, radio personality Dorothy Kilgallen and novelists Bernard Malamud and Mickey Spillane (amusing though it is to contemplate these latter two sharing a creative writing classroom, they matriculated four years apart...).

His early forays into professional acting were cut short by the arrival of World War II. Jeff enlisted in the Army cavalry, but within a year was promoted to lieutenant and served in an air support capacity in the Aleutian Islands for much of the war. He finished up at Fort Ord in California in 1946, got married, changed his name, and landed in Hollywood eager to resume his career.

Professional credits piled up quickly, first in radio, where a steady string of appearances in secondary roles led to noteworthy assignments as the star of The New Adventures of Michael Shayne (1947) and perhaps his best-known role as biology teacher and love interest Philip Boynton on Our Miss Brooks (1948).

Film stardom followed closely behind. In one of his first film roles, Chandler received a best Supporting Actor nomination for his portrayal of Apache leader Cochise in Broken Arrow (1950) (a characterization he would repeat in two more films). Perhaps to his ultimate detriment, he signed a ten-year deal with Universal, and the studio generally relegated him to second-tier action films, often westerns and war-themed pictures. Despite slender opportunity to win critical acclaim, Chandler became a very popular film personality, and he was able to parlay that recognition into additional small successes in music. He made records as a vocalist, starred briefly in his own Las Vegas revue, started a music publishing firm, and was credited as lyricist on the theme song from the Tony Curtis film Six Bridges to Cross (1956).

Jeff Chandler's career was as remarkably busy as his life was brief. In the spring of 1961, while playing baseball on the set of Merrill's Marauders, he suffered a herniated disk. Routine surgery somehow went badly awry and internal hemorrhaging ensued. Several subsequent operations failed to reverse the downward spiral of events. On June 17, more than a month after the original procedure, Jeff Chandler died of shock and peripheral vascular collapse at the age of 42.