

Van Heflin

Van Heflin was born Emmett Evan Heflin Jr. December 13, 1910 in Walters, Oklahoma. His father was a dental surgeon and his sister, Frances Heflin, would go on to be a Daytime Emmy-nominated soap opera actress. Heflin's parents separated and his brother and sister stayed with their mother while he went to live with his grandmother in California. His restless spirit led him to sea on a tramp steamer shortly after high school where he worked for a year. He returned to Oklahoma to study for a law degree but quit school after just two years when he returned to life at sea. Afterwards he decided to take up acting, appearing in several forgettable plays before being discovered by Katherine Hepburn who persuaded him to try films.

Heflin appeared in several films, contracting with RKO for a year, then broke through at MGM. In 1942 he won an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor in *Johnny Eager* for his portrayal as a heavy-drinking mobster with a conscience. Several other character parts led to his most memorable role in 1953 as the homesteader at the mercy of ruthless cattle ranchers in *Shane*, opposite Alan Ladd. Another famous roles include a desperate rancher trying to capture a desperate outlaw in *3:10 to Yuma*. One of Heflin's last film performances came in 1970 where he played the crazed bomber in *Airplane*. He also served his country during World War II as a combat cameraman as well as with the First Motion Picture Unit, producing training and morale-boosting films.

Between film roles Heflin continued his work on stage as well as radio. Along with his role as Philip Marlowe, he also acted in *The Lux Radio Theater*, *Suspense*, and *Cavalcade of America*. Van Heflin has two stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for his contributions to motion pictures and television. He died of a heart attack July 23, 1971.