Robert Mitchum
August 6, 1917 - July 1, 1997

Born in Bridgeport, Conn., Mitchum was of Scotch-Irish, Blackfoot Indian and Norwegian ancestry, he was left fatherless at 18 months. His mother married a newspaperman, and he lived in Delaware, Connecticut and Manhattan before running away from home. Mitchum knocked around during the Depression, working as a prizefighter, a coal miner, a nightclub bouncer, a jazz saxophonist and a ditch-digger.

Mitchum arrived in Long Beach, California, in 1936, staying with his sister Julie. Soon, the rest of the Mitchum family joined them in Long Beach. During this time, he worked as a ghostwriter for astrologer Carroll Righter. His sister Julie convinced him to join the local theater guild with her. In his years with the Players Guild of Long Beach, he made a living as a stagehand and occasional bit-player in company productions. He also wrote several short pieces which were performed by the guild. According to Lee Server's biography Robert Mitchum: Baby, I Don’t Care, Mitchum put his talent for poetry to work writing song lyrics and monologues for Julie’s nightclub performances. In 1940, he returned east to marry Dorothy Spence, taking her back to California. He remained a footloose character until the birth of their first child, James, nicknamed Josh (two more children followed, Chris and Petrine). Mitchum then got a steady job as a machine operator with the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation.

Mitchum was in over 110 films and TV series over the course of his career. He is ranked as #23 on the American Film Institute’s list of the 50 greatest American screen legends of all time. His first credited named role was as Quinn in the 1943 film Border Patrol. He appeared in several Hopalong Cassidy films including Colt Comrades, Bar 20, False Colors, and Riders of the Deadline. In 1944, he starred in the western film Nevada as Jim Lacy aka Nevada and a year later in the film, West of the Pecos as Pecos Smith. In 2011 Mitchum’s work was the subject of a 10-film UCLA Film &
"He was a wonderful actor to work with. He never made a mistake, he was always on time, very patient, and just a damn good actor," said Jane Russell, who some say was his best co-star. At his death in 1997 Mitchum was survived by his wife of 57 years, the former Dorothy Spence; two sons, Jim and Christopher, both actors, and a daughter, Petrine. Mitchum’s ashes were scattered at sea.

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References:

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