

Popping Questions at Actor Brad Harris

Most of the time we try to publish stories that inspire our readers, stories that tell of a man's struggle to overcome great odds. Unfortunately I feel it's only fair to tell you right from the start that if you're looking for a rags-to-riches epic you'd better flip the pages cause you're at the wrong place. The story of Brad Harris is one of a success who has become even more successful.

I can well remember first meeting Brad at the beach around six or seven years ago.

"Good grief," was the first thing I could think of saying. Everywhere Brad went he'd get the big stare. He had size, shape and definition. Others may have had as much, but it wasn't all put together in just the same way. Brad had one of the most rugged physiques I had ever seen. He left an impression at Muscle Beach that still lingers. This was several years ago. Now Brad is a movie star of international importance. He travels all over the world making films, many that he produces and directs himself.

For a man who's on the go as much as Brad, one has to be a sharpshooter to stop him long enough to get a story. While I'm no Wyatt Earp, I get lucky once in a while. One such lucky day happened not long ago. I was in Vince's gym to get a story on one of his members when who should come up to me but Brad Harris. He was on one of his rare trips to the States and told me he planned to head back to Europe within the next few days. This was my chance, so I made arrangements to get a story for our magazines; we set up another meeting for a few days later.

Unsuspecting, I waited out in front of Vince's at the appointed time. With no warning Brad came plummeting at me from across the street and leapt with all 185 pounds on top of me. It was a miracle that I didn't go splat on my face. As I staggered under the load Brad said, "Carry me into the gym."

What I won't do for a story. We got inside and sat in a corner so we wouldn't be trampled by the marauding muscle men who were hitting the weights.

Dick: Brad, let's start from the top. When did you get started in weight training?

Brad: Well, I've always been a natural athlete. I was on a football scholarship to the University of Southern California and while I was training to go out there I had a bad accident and I hurt one of my knees. I busted the cartilage and I had to have my knee operated on. The doctor I had at the time suggested I go into a gym to strengthen my knee with weight training.

D: How old were you at the time?

B: I was eighteen years old. When I got to the gym I saw all these weights lying around and began to think I wanted to build more than just a muscular kneecap. I also happened to be, and this is a theory of mine, in a growth period. You know there's a period between seventeen and something like twenty-five when you grow. I think that coincided with my training because I just blew up like a balloon over that summer. Since then I haven't had much trouble maintaining those initial gains I made when I was eighteen.

D: I know you got started in weight training to correct an injury, but did you ever think of bodybuilding just for the sake of bodybuilding?

B: Well, naturally I think most people—even ninety-nine percent—of the male population at some time are interested in their physiques. I found while I was in the gym and made such easy gains in such a short time, why naturally I became very enthusiastic. So I became dedicated to bodybuilding because it made me feel good to develop that way and I also noticed I got a lot of respect. People would inquire how I achieved my development so quickly and easily.



STUDIO

In a scene from one of his many European-made action flicks we catch Brad Harris in one of his lousy moods.

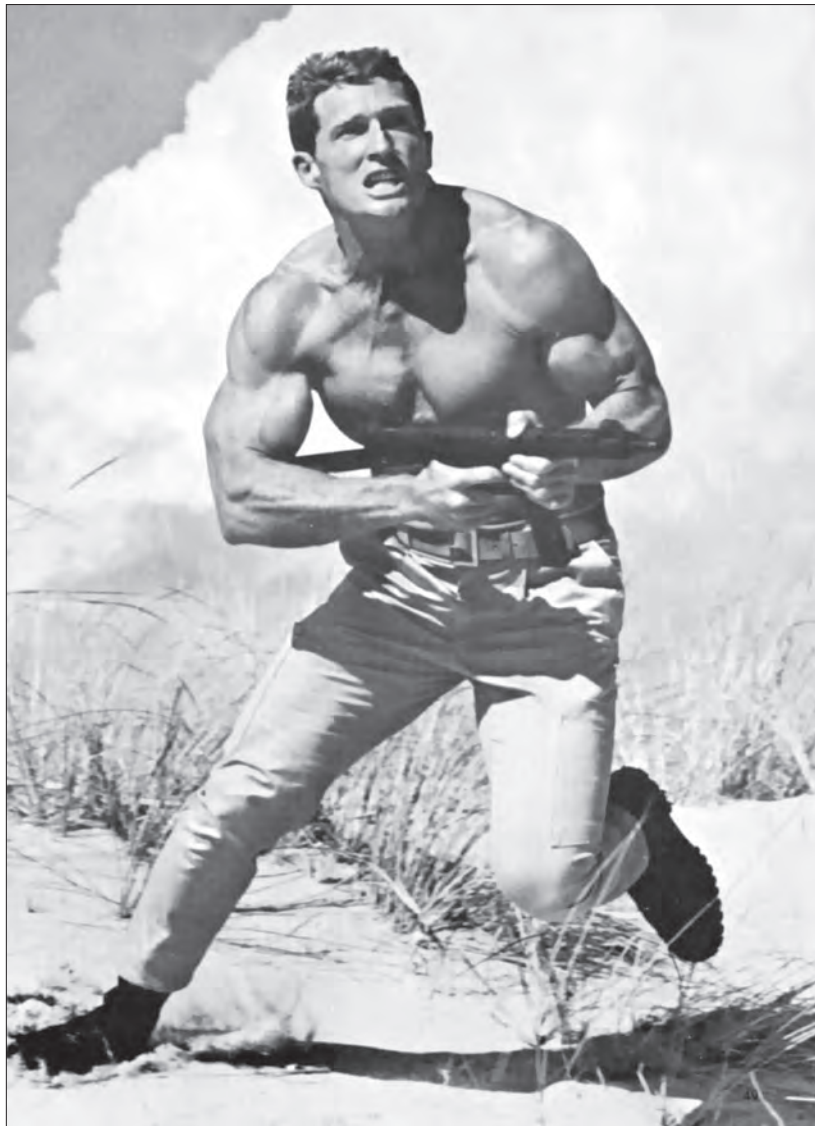
D: I remember down at the beach years ago, it used to amaze the rest of us how someone could be in the condition you were in. We'd ask what you did and you'd tell us you'd train just off and on whenever you felt like it. This was accompanied by the rest of us gnashing our teeth in envy.

B: Well, that's the way it's been. I'll admit, however, that I trained fairly hard for the first two or three years. I mean hard for me. Which was to hit the weights for about two hours, three times a week. I finally got to the point where I didn't want to get any bigger since I felt I would be out of proportion if I did.

D: So you just cut out training all together for a while?

B: No, but when I did reach that point where I wanted to go no further, I started to cut down on my routines and found I could maintain what I had with only an hour, three times a week. Say, it's pretty noisy in here, why don't we go to my place?

(That sounded like a pretty good idea. So, with Brad in the lead in his sports car we went into the hills to the house where he was staying.)



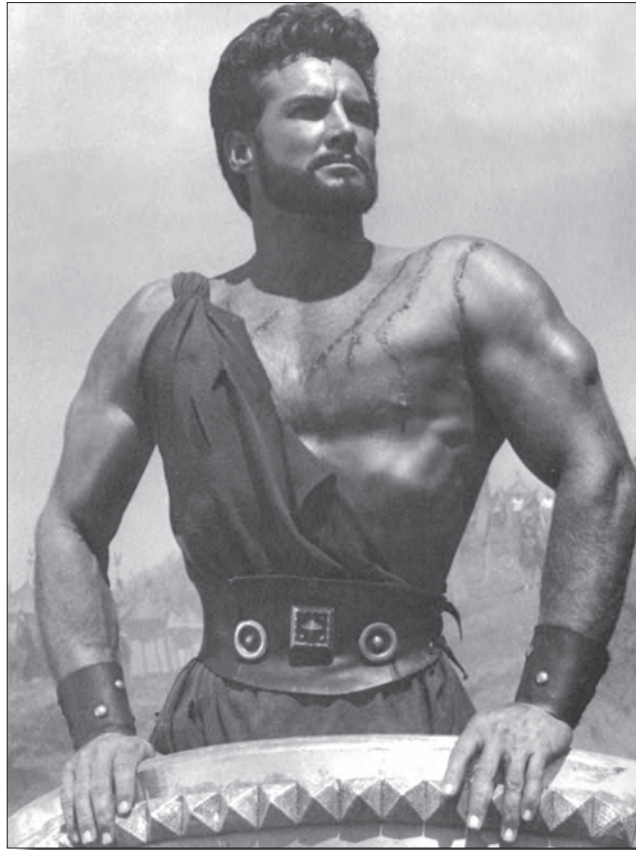
STUDIO

Brad Harris is an actor who loves muscle building, is certain to visit the gym regularly, but he doesn't need to slave, beg, bleed, suffer or cry over the proposition. He's a natural crisp-muscled athlete free of the millstone to which many of us are bound.

B: This is the home of a good friend of mine. Let's sit out here by the pool and soak in some sun.

D: In your training, did you ever have any inspirations?

B: Well, at the time when I first became enthusiastic, why naturally I was reading the magazines and had to go to Muscle Beach to see all the big men. It was there where I first saw Steve Reeves. I couldn't believe my eyes.



STUDIO

A bloodied Hercules, played by Steve Reeves, reviews the battle-field from his chariot. Now look at the mess I've gotten us into.

D: Reeves must have inspired more bodybuilders than any other single champion. I've always thought of Grimek as the best.

B: Oh yes, Grimek is great, but I had never seen him in person. With Reeves it was different. I got to know him a little and, of course, when you have a personal contact with someone you have more interest in them.

D: What about your diet?

B: Well, I guess you might say I just eat food, period.

D: You mean you don't take any supplements of any sort?

B: No, I just...

D: I know, you just never found the need.

B: I'm afraid not. I just seem to be able to keep in condition pretty easily, without any nutritional help.

D: What are some of your favorite sports?

B: I was always a natural athlete.

D: Figures.

B: My favorite sport, however, was football, in which I played fullback. My knee injury cut my football plans short, however.

D: How much do you weigh?

B: Right now I weigh between 185 and 190 pounds. I can hardly remember not being at that weight.

D: How tall are you?

B: I'm five-foot, eleven inches.

D: Do you know what your measurements are or do you ever take them?

B: No, I really don't. Once in a while I check them out just out of curiosity.

D: Have you been curious lately?

B: I taped my arm the other day and it was a solid eighteen inches cold. When I got back home around four or five weeks ago the arm taped seventeen and one-half inches. That was after a year and a half without being able to get to a gym.

D: In other words you packed on a good half-inch.

B: Yes, that's how easy it is for me to put on muscle. My chest is around forty-eight or forty-nine inches and my waist is thirty-one.

D: You're a lucky guy.

B: I can't believe it myself. People ask me what I do and I tell them, but they always think I must follow some secret routine. The more surprised they seem, the luckier I feel.

D: Yeah, Vince tells me you never practice any posing and said that just taking off your shirt is something. He also says you take the wildest workout he's ever seen.

B: I don't follow any special routine. Speaking in generalities, I'd say that I just lift moderate weights with fairly high reps.

D: Do you have any hobbies?

B: I like horseback riding and motorcycling.

D: It's a wonder you have time for that with all your film work. How did it all get started?

B: I'd have to go back to Steve Reeves. He opened the doors as far as bodybuilders being in the films. If it wasn't for him I don't feel I'd be where I am today. As we all know, he went over to Italy and made "Hercules," which opened the doors for all of us.

D: How did you personally get your start?

B: I was over in Rome to see the Olympic Games and while I was there I went to see an agent. As a direct result of the furor that Reeves had created and my bodybuilding activities, I got the job.

D: I personally think that you're one of the best naturally gifted actors of all the bodybuilders to make it big in films. Why don't you do more work in Hollywood?

B: I suppose it's because I got my start in Europe and working there has gotten to be a habit. In the last seven years, I've starred in twenty-one films.

D: I didn't know you made that many.

B: Only four of these were physique films. The rest were all action adventure films or foreign intrigue, or westerns. At the end of this year I'll be producing, along with another fellow, my first film. This and the fact that I've got a great career in Europe and other parts of the world make it needless for me to come to Hollywood. I can work straight through the next five years without ten days' break if I want to. Now when I want time off, I have to make time off. I also have a great deal more freedom in doing what I want with a production. I have my hand in directing a film, I check over the editing and now I'll be producing. I could never do that in Hollywood. I don't think I could ever be happy just acting. I have to be more involved. That's the kind of person I am.

D: Is there any film we can look for here at home?

B: Just before I came home this time I finished a film with Dana Andrews called "The Seven Million Dollar Grab."

D: That was made in Europe?

B: Yes, we filmed in London, Italy, Monte Carlo, Cannes...

D: You've had a fabulous life, haven't you? You've been everywhere.

B: Yes, I've been very lucky in so many ways. Right now I am going back to do the sixth in a series of German spy thrillers in Yugoslavia. They've been very well accepted. I play a sort of a James Bond type. The next one will be done in Canada later this year. After that we'll be doing one of the series in Rangoon.

D: How do you get in any training?

B: I always manage to get in some training every day when I'm on the road. Even if it's just some chins and dips. No matter what, I never seem to go down.

I couldn't stand it any more. The guy has everything: looks, physique, talent, the whole ball of wax. I had heard enough. I went home and solemnly swore I would never touch another weight—until my next workout the following morning.



CHARLES

Three Muscle Beach guys who don't have a mean bone in their muscular bodies, Armand Tanny, Glenn Sundby and George Eiferman, line up in the desert sun in Las Vegas a half a century ago. I'll bet Mae West wasn't far away.



SCHRAMM

My first visit in the summer of '63 to the area once known as Muscle Beach. I'm the butterball kneeling on the precious sand between John Tristram, on my right, and Hugo Labra, Don Peters and Mike Bondura on my left. We represent the instant brotherhood of bodybuilders.