



IRON GAME HISTORY



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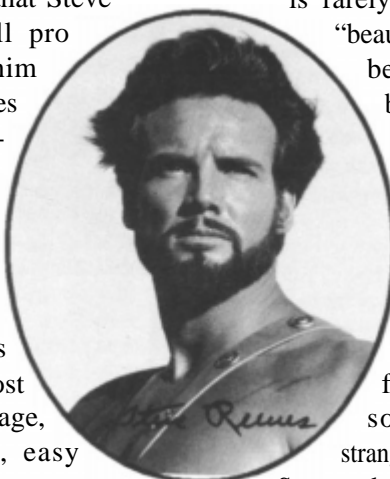
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Steve Reeves—1925-2000

When we learned from mutual friends that Steve Reeves had died in a hospital in Escondido, California, we found it hard to believe. Hard to believe that a man who—as of August of 1999, when we spent a day with him on his horse ranch—was the quintessence of vigorous health had fallen ill and then died. Hard to believe he would even be in the hospital, except to visit a sick friend. What struck us on our trip to his ranch, just as it had every other time we saw him, was that Steve Reeves was a man blessed out of all proportion by nature. Everyone who ever saw him would argue that physically, Steve Reeves had what could only be called an embarrassment of riches. He was, indeed, a perfect man come to life. When we saw him last summer he told us that he weighed 215 pounds, and that his weight had stayed around that figure for some years. At 6'1" and dressed in the jeans and boots of the horseman that he most assuredly was, he still had the erect carriage, broad shoulders, and narrow-hipped, easy movement of a young athlete.

One thing that has always been interesting about Steve is that because his face and body were so refined, many people tended to think of him as not being a particularly large or big-boned man. But when a person would meet him and shake that wide, thick, work-hardened mitt any thoughts of Steve being a small man were laid quickly and completely to rest.



I first met Steve, other than in the pages of the muscle magazines, when I was a very young man. I was sitting in the cool, dark Paramount Theater in Austin, Texas, popcorn in my hand, waiting for a god to appear on the screen. In time he did appear, and he did not disappoint. It was classic type-casting—Steve Reeves playing Hercules. A god playing a god. For reasons too complicated to go into here, the word that fits Steve best is rarely used in the iron game. That word is “beautiful.” Steve was the essence of masculine beauty, and he retained much of this beauty until the end of his life.

When I came to know him in later years, I was pleased to learn that when nature blessed Steve so extravagantly the blessing was leavened with a healthy sense of humor. He knew how to make light of his true uniqueness. Armand Tanny, one of his old pals from the Muscle Beach days told me that sometimes, when there were a few strangers down at the beach crowded around Steve where he was seated, he'd pause, move one bare foot forward, look down at it as he turned it this way and that, and quietly observe to no one in particular, “See anything wrong with that foot? It looks more or less perfect to me. Great proportion, shapely toes, blends well into the ankle. Yep, a perfect foot.” He'd then lean back and stare out into the middle distance, waiting to see how long it would take for the strangers to realize he was jok-

ing. Apparently, sometimes they never did because, as a matter of fact, the foot *was* perfect.

A few years ago, Steve and his companion, Debra Englehorn, spent several days with us at the our library here at UT and looking at ranches outside Austin. Because we live on a ranch here in Texas, when we repaid the visit we were very interested to see his own place. Everywhere we looked there was ample evidence of the care and thought he had lavished on his beloved horses. From the handsome, customized stable to the paddocks; from the riding rings to the shining coats of his magnificent stallions; from the way he walked

among them, stroking one and speaking quietly to the next, I could see how appropriate it was that this most beautiful of men had surrounded himself with, and given much of his life to, the most beautiful of animals.

Just as we did with John Grimek, we will devote the next issue entirely to articles about the life and accomplishments of Steve Reeves. We invite anyone who has something to contribute—be it an article, a photo, a letter, or just an idea—to contact us soon so we can make the Reeves issue as complete and representative as possible.