

STEVE REEVES DAZZLED THE WORLD

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The phone rang on Monday 1st May 2000, and a voice of despair said those fateful words, "Steve died a few hours ago." How could that be!? Reeves the magnificent, the ultimate idol who inspired so many! Reeves, who surpassed the beauty of the statues of Michelangelo's "David" and the Farnese Hercules and that of the immortal Sandow. The sensational news was met with an almost total disbelief by the whole world of bodybuilding.

Steve Reeves was "IT." There are many stars but he was a supernova who, in bodybuilding terms, transcended all those before him and since. From head to foot Steve Reeves was superlative. "If you are a miracle of beauty, you can't help it. That's why you are so immensely applauded for it". (John Ayscough, *Levia-Pendera*.)

When discussing the merits of the ideal physique, mention the name of Steve Reeves, and I can think of no other person who causes so many grown men to go misty-eyed. Show a photograph of Reeves to the uninitiated and you have an instant convert.

What was Reeves really like? He was magnanimous. After the Oscar Heidenstam Foundation had honored Grimek in 1992, I received a very courteous letter from Steve, suggesting that if sometime in the future we were considering him, then first we might wish to consider a British bodybuilder.

In 1994 Steve was inducted into the Oscar Heidenstam Foundation "Hall of Fame." When he walked into the banqueting room his presence didn't require an announcement; the atmosphere was nuclear fusion! There he was, aged 68, attending his first public engagement in England since winning the first NABBA

Mr Universe title back in 1950. He was as handsome as ever, remarkably so, and he exuded class.

In 1959 Reeves was voted the biggest box office star in the world, for his title role in *Hercules*. His film career is of course well documented but probably not so well known is that during the filming of *The Last Days of Pompeii* he dislocated his shoulder when his chariot crashed into a tree. Without fuss, he manipulated it back into place (not the tree!) and resumed filming. Steve retired from acting in 1969. He actually refused the role in *A Fistful of Dollars* which later went to a relatively unknown actor (at the time), Clint Eastwood.

Paradoxically, Steve was rather shy, preferring privacy; he chose his friends carefully. However, in a small group, he was always relaxed and very amusing. We last met in 1998 at a barbecue party, organized for Steve's family and friends by his close friends George and Tuesday Coates. Over a pint, we were all ears as the conversation drifted to his current training. At the age of 72, he was fit and healthy, and his biceps were truly rock hard! Steve regularly walked miles and cycled even more; it was not unusual for him to be seen on his bike 45 miles from his ranch in Valley Center, California. He loved his purebred Morgan horses, indeed he appreciated all things of beauty and never more so

than when riding with Deborah in the solitude of his other ranch in Montana. Steve also had an affinity with the Egyptian Pyramids. He often expressed his admiration for their timeless majesty. Indeed, Steve Reeves is a pyramid among the immortals.

His ashes were scattered on his Montana ranch, and his headstone will be a pyramid.



Here, Reeve's rigid, somewhat inartistic pose is in sharp contrast with London's famous statue, "Physical Energy."