

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's Hollywood legend **Burt Reynolds**

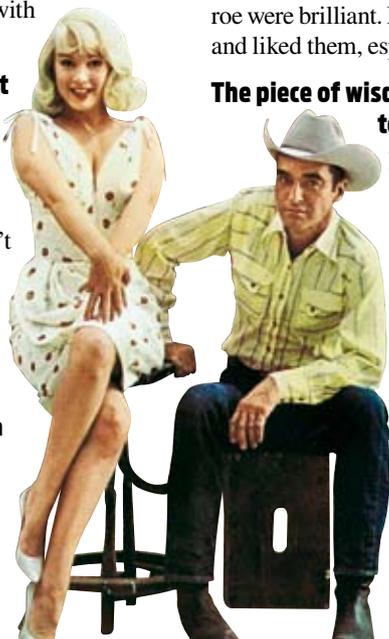
The prized possession you value above all others... The Lifetime Achievement Award I received from the Stuntmen's Association in Hollywood last year. I used to insist on taking the hits and falls. It didn't hurt then, but I'm paying for it now!

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... I wish I hadn't got badly hurt playing [American] football when I was 19. To play professionally was my dream, but my knee was shattered in a tackle and couldn't be fixed.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Women! I find it hard to resist wooing a woman and being wooed. But it all comes crashing down eventually and I don't handle break-ups well, which is probably why I'm single at the moment. I'm cool with that though.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... People making up their mind what you're like when they don't know a damned thing about you.

Right: Marilyn and Montgomery Clift in *The Misfits*. Above right: an American football helmet and *The Catcher In The Rye*. Far right: Sally Field in *The Flying Nun*



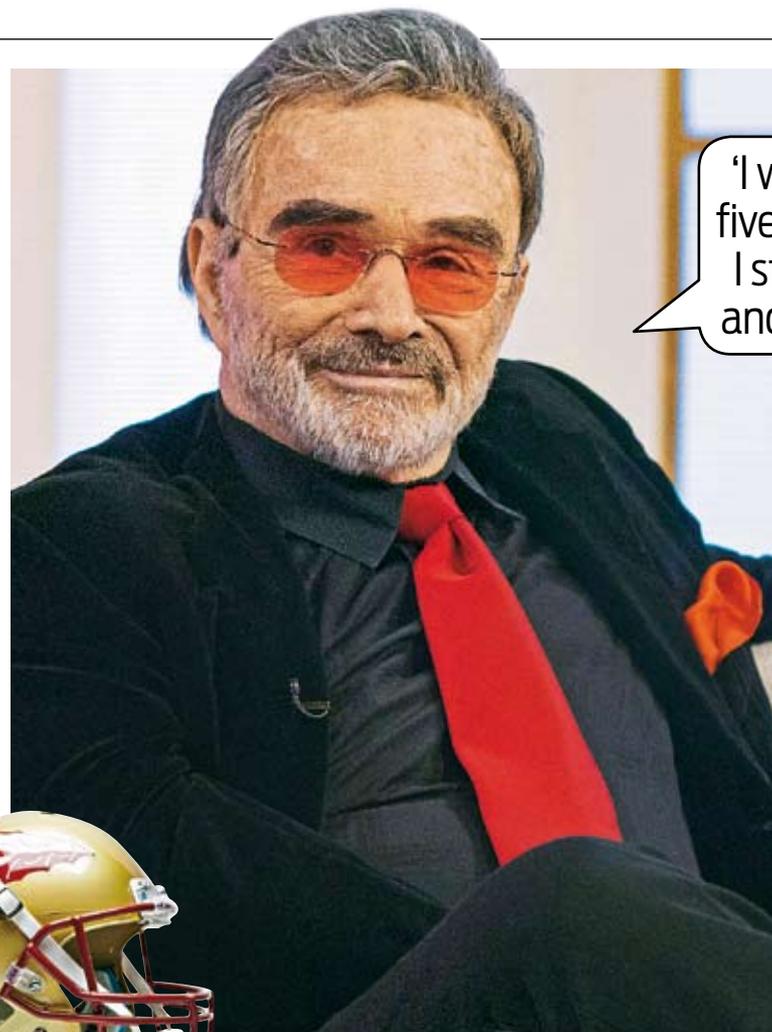
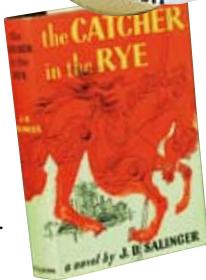
The book that holds an everlasting resonance... *The Catcher In The Rye*. My English literature teacher gave it to me when I was 15 and it was the first time I'd ever been enthralled by a book.

The person who has influenced you most... My father, Big Burt. He fought in five major battles in WWII and the men under him said he was the best. Later he became a police chief and he taught me to never break my word. He died in 2002 aged 95.

The film you can watch time and time again... *The Misfits*. Montgomery Clift, Clark Gable and Marilyn Monroe were brilliant. I knew them all well and liked them, especially Marilyn.

The piece of wisdom you'd pass on to a child... Never let your friends down.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Dancing. I'm 80 now, so I don't move as well as I used to, but I can still do enough. It's fun and makes you feel free – especially if you're dancing with a woman who has rhythm.



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The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... WWII General George Patton. I'd like to know if he was ever afraid.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... Sally Field!

We were together for five years, but I messed it up. She's the big love that I lost. I still have a crush on her and I'd love her to call, but that'll never happen. If I called her, she'd probably laugh, then hang up!

The unending quest that drives you on... I'm still waiting for *the* part. Most actors feel this way. Great roles are around, but you often find actors you're not particularly fond of get them!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Finding the arts centre at college. When I went on stage for the first time, I felt as good as I did when I played football.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... The first time I saw my son Quinton, who's 27 now. He was three days old and we [he and ex-wife Loni Anderson] had adopted him. I cried as I held him and looked into his eyes.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I don't think people who harm children get punished enough. I'd find a way to rough them up a bit.

The poem that touches your soul... Carl Sandburg's *The People, Yes*. His heroes are normal folk who are trying their best, but don't get credit.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... I've been way too good at playing arrogant. The reality is that I'm kind and open.

The song that means most to you... *Someone To Watch Over Me* sung by Dinah [Shore, his girlfriend in the 1970s]. She was very special and that song always cheers me up.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd meet some old high school buddies – who live near my home Valhalla, in Tequesta, Florida – for a breakfast of eggs, bacon and pancakes. We'd come back to the house and shoot pool, then I'd take Quinton for a big pasta lunch in Rome. He's training to be a film

editor (not an actor, thank God!) so after lunch I'd take him to Cinecittà, the big film studios there. In the evening we'd see a play in London's West End. I'd end the day having dinner with my friend Clint Eastwood at *The Ivy* in LA. We'd probably have a good chardonnay and lots of laughs.

The saddest time that shook your world... Losing my parents. You know it'll happen, but it was still horrible. [His mother Fern died in 1992, aged 90.]

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To learn French. I dated Catherine Deneuve for 12 weeks in the 70s. I could have done so much better if I'd been able to make her laugh. One day she asked me why I couldn't learn French and I said, 'Because I'm stupid!'

The philosophy that underpins your life... Don't act, just behave. I teach acting and I tell all my students that.

The order of service at your funeral... I want an Irish-style funeral, with people telling funny stories about me. I don't want any Bible quotes. I'll leave all that's needed for a huge party afterwards. I want to be buried near my parents' grave by the river at Valhalla.

The way you want to be remembered... As a friend you could call on if you were in trouble.

The Plug... Burt Reynolds' memoir *But Enough About Me* is out now in paperback, Blink Publishing, £8.99, blinkpublishing.co.uk. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PS...

Salma Hayek's Tale Of Tales is in cinemas Friday. New Red Hot

Chili Peppers album The Getaway is out the same day. And

the Crown Imperial classical concert at Theatre Royal Drury

Lane tomorrow marks the Queen's Official 90th Birthday

NEXT WEEK

- Mathew Horne on his new comedy whodunnit *Agatha Raisin*
- Sizzling grills for Father's Day
- Monty Don on the wildest roses you can get
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings

