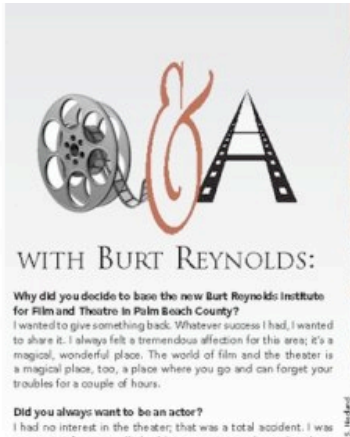


### art&culture Magazine of Palm Beach County's Photos – Wall Photos

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**Why did you decide to base the new Burt Reynolds Institute for Film and Theatre in Palm Beach County?**  
 I wanted to give something back. Whatever success I had, I wanted to share it. I always felt a tremendous affection for this area; it's a magical, wonderful place. The world of film and the theater is a magical place, too, a place where you go and can forget your troubles for a couple of hours.

**Did you always want to be an actor?**  
 I had no interest in the theater; that was a total accident. I was recovering from a really bad knee operation; the reality that I wasn't going to play football again hadn't set in yet. I was picking up some credits at the junior college [Palm Beach Junior College] and I had this English literature class. I sat, like all football players, in the last row. I had this amazing teacher; his name was Watson B. Duncan III and he truly changed my life. I slowly moved from the back row to the front row. One day, I was sitting in the front row and he said, "We're having readings for the play." I said, "What play?"

**What is the key to your success?**  
 It is luck — no really good actor won't admit that—and I have been incredibly lucky. As corny as it might sound, that's truly what teaching is about, passing it on in some way.

**Would you consider yourself an overachiever?**  
 I certainly was an overachiever as an athlete. I had more heart than ability. In football you could get away with it. Baseball and basketball are skill sports; football is all about getting knocked down and getting up. I suppose I had a lot of anger in me, too. I needed to put it somewhere. You can do that in football. I loved the sport.

**You obviously take great pride in your students, both past and present. Have any of them gone on to successful careers in the industry?**  
 It's amazing. We've had four or five kids on Broadway. We had one young man, Tommy Thompson, who wrote and produced Quantum Leap. Another young lady, Lisa Soland, is an award-winning playwright. Mark Fauser has a great theater in the Midwest. The list goes on and on.

**What advice would you give someone who is considering a career in acting?**  
 I think you have to commit to being a little ridiculous and not to be embarrassed by it. You have to be prepared to make a fool of yourself. You have to have a sense of silly. I think you have to hold on to the spirit of a child. If you can hold onto it, then it will help you. We shouldn't put all of our toys away. If you're going to be an actor you have to believe in things that are not there.

**Are there still acting challenges you would like to tackle?**  
 I want to do something that's kind of a surprise to everybody. I'd like to do something that's quite wordy. I certainly am not going to try to do Shakespeare — the English eat our lunch at it but they can't do Tennessee Williams and we can. I'd like to do something that Mr. [James] Cagney would be really proud of, something my age that has a little grit to it and hopefully some humor, something that would allow me to stretch some muscles that I haven't used as an actor. Someday, somebody's going to offer me something that's going to scare the hell out of me. That's the part I should play. Cagney was fearless and that's what I'd like to be.

**How did you wind up with a dog named Precious?**  
 She was named by the wonderful people at Safe Harbor Animal Sanctuary, where I adopted her. It's not a name I would have considered on my own, but after spending time with her it was so fitting that I could not change it. Precious—"Of such great value that a suitable price is hard to estimate." Seems like a perfect name for a beautiful lady.

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