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# Arnold Schwarzenegger Biography

**July 30, 1947 • Graz, Austria**

Actor, politician, bodybuilder



Schwarzenegger, Arnold.

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Most people successfully pursue one or two careers throughout their lives. By the age of fifty-six, Arnold Schwarzenegger had tackled at least three—bodybuilding, acting, and politics. It is difficult to break into any one of these professions, yet Schwarzenegger managed to excel in each and every one. He earned thirteen world bodybuilding championships, is considered one of the most influential actors in Hollywood, and, in 2003, without ever running for political office before, he became the governor of California. If Schwarzenegger had listened to his many critics along the way, he never would have succeeded. However, with discipline, determination, and drive, he proved that an Austrian-born immigrant can achieve the American dream.

## (The need to succeed

Arnold Alois Schwarzenegger was born on July 30, 1947, the second son of Gustav and Aurelia Schwarzenegger. He was raised, along with older brother Meinhard, in the tiny village of Thal, just outside of Graz, Austria. Schwarzenegger's father, Gustav, was the local police chief, and the family lived above the police station where Gustav worked. The Schwarzenegger home was a humble one. In fact, they did not have indoor plumbing until Arnold was a teenager. This was not uncommon at the time, however, since families all over Europe were just beginning to recover from the effects of World War II (1939–45).

Before joining the police force, Gustav Schwarzenegger was a military officer, and he ran his household in strict military fashion. Both Arnold and Meinhard were required to get up before sunrise to tend to their chores. After chores came a rigorous exercise routine, followed by breakfast. Gustav also instilled a love of sports in his sons. Meinhard, who died when he was twenty-three years old in a car accident, was a

boxing champion. Arnold showed promise as a soccer player. It was while performing exercises to strengthen his legs for soccer that Schwarzenegger turned to the sport that would eventually make him famous: bodybuilding.

Arnold Schwarzenegger pursued weightlifting and bodybuilding with a passion. He trained for hours a day, both at a local gym and at home where he set up a training area in a room that had no heat. He also studied anatomy and nutrition to understand how to become physically fit. His parents worried that he was obsessed with training, but Schwarzenegger had his eyes on a goal; that goal was to leave his little village behind and become a success in America.

"I learned something from all these years of lifting and training hard.... What I learned was that we are always stronger than we know."

## (Mr. Universe

In 1965, after he graduated from high school, Schwarzenegger joined the Austrian army. Just one month after enlisting, he won his first bodybuilding title, Mr. Junior Europe. The competition was held in Germany, and Schwarzenegger had left his army base without permission to compete. As a result, he spent the next year in the brig, which is a holding area for people in the military who have committed offenses. After he was released, Schwarzenegger resumed his training with gusto, often spending up to five hours a day in the gym.

## (The Ronald Reagan Comparison

Arnold Schwarzenegger was not the first celebrity to hold public office. For example, professional wrestler Jesse "The Body" Ventura (1951–) was governor of Minnesota from 1998 until 2002, and from 1986 to 1988 actor/director Clint Eastwood (1930–) was mayor of Carmel, California. The best-known celebrity-turned-politician, however, may be Ronald Reagan (1911–2004), former governor of California (1967–1975) and president of the United States (1981–1989). Throughout his run for governor, Schwarzenegger was constantly compared to Reagan for some obvious reasons: both were actors, both were very charismatic speakers, and both were new to politics when they ran for office. But, are there other similarities?

- **Age:** Schwarzenegger and Reagan were both fifty-six years old when they became governor of California.
- **Nicknames:** Reagan was known as "The Great Communicator" while Schwarzenegger was dubbed "The Oak" because of his strength and concentration.



***Arnold Schwarzenegger poses with a bronze bust of President Ronald Reagan.***

Mike Guastella/WireImage.com.

- **Sports:** Both men shared a love of sports and got their start in the world of athletics. Schwarzenegger was a bodybuilder; Reagan played football and was a swimmer. Reagan also got his first break into show business as an announcer for football and baseball games in Iowa.

His grueling schedule paid off in 1967, when, at the age of twenty, Schwarzenegger won his first Mr. Universe title. The Mr. Universe competition is an annual event sponsored by the National Amateur Bodybuilders Association (NABBA). Competitors are judged on such things as size and definition of muscles, balance and proportion of body parts, and overall presentation. The youngest person to ever win the competition, Schwarzenegger was confident that he would keep his title the following year. He was also excited because his dream of traveling to the United States was about to come true since the 1968 Mr. Universe competition was to be held in Miami, Florida.

Although he did not win the 1968 title in Miami, Schwarzenegger was noticed by fitness pioneer Joe Weider (1922–). Weider was so impressed by the young bodybuilder that he invited him to stay in the United States and live and train with him in Los Angeles, California. Schwarzenegger jumped at the chance. Weider became Schwarzenegger's mentor, and from the late 1960s through the 1970s, Schwarzenegger devoted himself to training and competing. He reclaimed his Mr. Universe crown in 1969, and went on to dominate every major bodybuilding competition, including Mr. Universe, Mr. World, and Mr. Olympia.

In addition to being a star bodybuilder, Schwarzenegger helped popularize the sport. He wrote articles about his unique training methods for Weider's fitness magazines; he also was featured in a 1977 documentary about bodybuilding competitions, called *Pumping Iron*. The documentary was quite popular and gave Schwarzenegger his first taste of Hollywood celebrity. In 1980, at the age of thirty-three, he officially retired from bodybuilding to devote himself to a new career: acting.

## (Box-office gold

Schwarzenegger made a few low-budget movies in the 1970s, cast mostly in small roles that required big muscles, not big talent. In 1982 he was tapped to play the lead in *Conan the Barbarian*, based on the comic-book hero of the same name. Again, Schwarzenegger's strength was in his biceps, not his acting skills. Critics panned his performance, claiming that it was nearly impossible to understand his German-accented English. Audiences, however, loved the movie, which turned out to be a box-office hit. Two years later, in 1984, Schwarzenegger cemented his box-office appeal when he appeared in the movie *The Terminator*.

In *The Terminator*, Schwarzenegger played a violent cyborg (part robot, part human) who is sent from the future to exterminate the mother of humankind's future leader. He spoke seventy-four words in the movie, all delivered in a monotone, robotic voice. Audiences did not mind the lack of acting ability, and they flocked to see Schwarzenegger in the sci-fi thriller. The movie was so popular that Schwarzenegger became known for his character's famous one-liner: "I'll be back," or as Schwarzenegger pronounced it, "Awl be buck."

Action movies like *The Terminator* proved to be wildly popular with people of all ages, and Schwarzenegger proved to be the perfect action hero. He followed *The Terminator* with a string of movies, including *Commando* (1985), *Predator* (1987), *Total Recall* (1990), and *True Lies* (1994). He

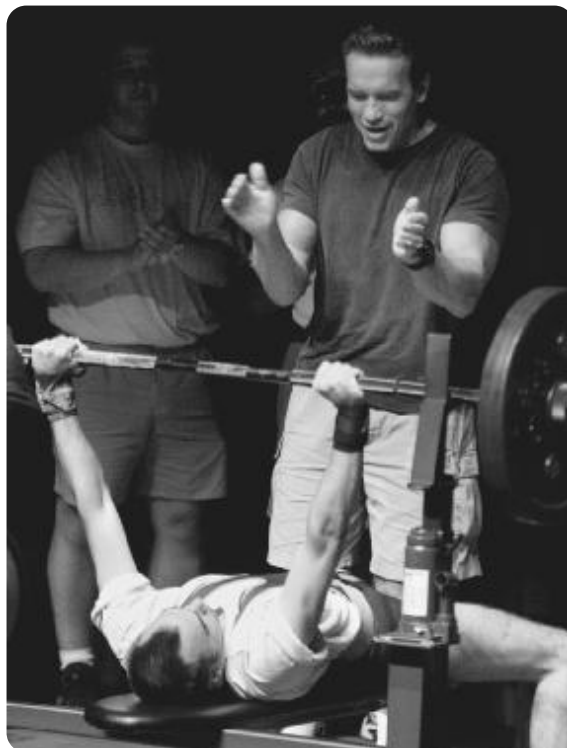
also continued the Terminator movies, starring in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991), which produced the famous line, "Hasta la vista, baby," and *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* (2003). For his role in *Terminator 3*, Schwarzenegger was paid \$30 million.

In addition to playing the tough-as-nails hero, Schwarzenegger starred in a number of comedies, including three movies made by director Ivan Reitman (1946–): *Twins* (1988), *Kindergarten Cop* (1990), and *Junior* (1994). Moviegoers embraced the "lighter side of Arnold," and critics admitted that Schwarzenegger was growing as an actor. Everyone agreed that he was box-office gold. In fact, in 1993, he was recognized as the International Box Office Star of the Decade.

By 2004 Schwarzenegger had appeared in nearly thirty movies, and he brought his unique style to each role. One thing he never lost was his accent. Comedians and critics made countless jokes about the way "Ah-nuld" talked, but Schwarzenegger seemed to take it in stride. He also explained in a 1991 interview with Pat Broeske that he did not want to get rid of his accent completely because it had become, Broeske noted, "his trademark, his signature."

## (The family man

Schwarzenegger's trademark made him a very wealthy actor, and he used his money wisely, investing in real estate and several businesses, including the restaurant chain Planet Hollywood. He was also a devoted family man. Schwarzenegger met his wife, television journalist Maria Shriver (1955–), in 1977. The couple married in 1986; they



**Arnold Schwarzenegger supports Willie McKinney during the bench press competition of the 1999 Special Olympics World Games.**

AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission.

have four children, two boys and two girls. Shriver was no stranger to celebrity, considering she is part of one of the most famous families in the United States. Her mother, Eunice Kennedy Shriver (1921–), is the sister of U.S. president John F. Kennedy (1917–1963).

Most people thought that the couple made a very odd pair. He was a brawny bodybuilder turned actor. She was a "brain" who graduated from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and was coanchor of *CBS Morning News*. He was a well-known supporter of the Republican Party. The Republican Party is considered to be the more conservative of the two major political parties in the United States. Shriver, as part of the Kennedy clan, was a Democrat to the core. Members of the Democratic Party are traditionally considered to be more liberal. Those closest to the couple, however, say they are a perfect match. Both have competitive drives; both are committed to their family; and both share a wacky sense of humor.

The Schwarzeneggers also share a commitment to politics and to social causes. Since 1979 they have been devoted to the Special Olympics, helping to raise funds and awareness. Established by Eunice Shriver in 1968, Special Olympics provides year-round sports training and sponsors annual athletic competitions for children and adults with mental retardation. There are Special Olympics programs in almost 150 countries; Arnold serves as the Special Olympics International Weight Training Coach.

In 1990 Schwarzenegger was given an incredible opportunity to spread his message about the importance of fitness when President George H. W. Bush (1924–) appointed him chairman of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (PCPFS). According to the PCPFS Web site, the goal of the council is to "promote, encourage and motivate Americans of all ages to become physically active and participate in sports." Schwarzenegger was the perfect spokesman. With high energy and unlimited enthusiasm, he traveled across the country spreading the word that it was "hip to be fit." When Democrat Bill Clinton (1946–) took over the presidency in 1993, Schwarzenegger resigned from the council.

## (The "Collectionator")

Schwarzenegger had been such a dynamic public figure in the Bush administration that people wondered if he was heading for a future in politics. Schwarzenegger denied the rumors for years, claiming he was too busy being a businessman and family man. In 2002, however, he spent a good deal of time campaigning in California for state grant money to fund after-school programs for children. And, in 2003, when California governor Gray Davis (1942–) was threatened by a recall, the buzz was strong that Schwarzenegger would throw his hat in the ring.

The year 2003 was a strange one in California politics. Democrat Gray Davis, who had over twenty years of experience in politics, was governor, and had been since 1998. Throughout his first term in office, however, Davis faced a number of problems, including an out-of-control budget, a sagging state economy, and electricity blackouts that left most of the state without power for some time during 2001. Californians were not happy, and they blamed Davis for the sad state of affairs. In 2002, just months into his second term of office, citizens started a campaign to recall Davis as governor. This meant that Davis, through a special election, would possibly be replaced.

The election led to media frenzy since it was the first time in California's history that a governor faced a recall. In addition, people came out of the woodwork to campaign for Davis's job. On August 6, 2003, Schwarzenegger fueled the frenzy by announcing that he, too, was going to run for governor. He made his announcement during an interview on the late-night television program *The Tonight Show*.

Schwarzenegger spent the next several months campaigning in rather untraditional ways. For example, he chatted with Oprah Winfrey (1954–) on her afternoon talk show, and he was interviewed by disc jockey Howard Stern (1954–), who is known for his outrageous radio antics. Schwarzenegger peppered

his interviews with references to his movies, promising to say "Hasta la vista" to new taxes and calling himself the "Collectionator," since one of his goals was to ask the federal government for funds to bail California out of its economic crisis.

## (Arnold to the rescue

All of the media attention prompted voters to turn out in droves, and on October 8, 2003, the citizens of California elected Arnold Schwarzenegger governor with 48.6 percent of the vote. On November 17, during his swearing-in ceremony, Schwarzenegger commented, "It is no secret that I'm a newcomer to politics. I realize I was elected on faith and hope. And I feel a great responsibility not to let the people down."

The public may have felt they needed an action hero to come to their aid, but political commentators had their doubts. Schwarzenegger was able to campaign on catchy phrases, but what would he do once in office? According to political consultant David Axelrod in a 2003 *Time* article, "This isn't the movies. No one is going to throw him a ray gun so he can blow up the deficit."

Schwarzenegger's first days in office were watched closely. He made good on several of his campaign promises, including lowering car taxes. He was also applauded for trying to get California Democrats and Republicans to work together to help solve the state's budget problems. Schwarzenegger, however, was just beginning to flex his political muscles. His state still faced a staggering amount of debt, and he tried to figure a way out without hurting social programs like education and health care.

In March 2004, voters passed Schwarzenegger's Proposition 57, which would allow the state to use bonds (low-interest, long-term loans) to slash \$15 billion from the ever-growing debt. Politicians considered the proposition to be a daring move, but Schwarzenegger was used to taking chances, and he had faith that the voters would believe in him. In a rally held just after the vote, and reported on CNN, he reassured the public that his borrowing plan would "make California the golden state that it once was."

Just months into office, people began to speculate once again what was next for Arnold Schwarzenegger, family man, businessman, actor, and now governor. When he appeared on the television program *Meet the Press*, in February 2004, host Tim Russert wondered if perhaps Schwarzenegger had his eye on the White House. Schwarzenegger shooed away the question, commenting that he had been too busy tackling California's problems to think about his next move. "I have no idea," he commented, "I haven't thought about that at all."

But, can we believe him, since that is exactly what Schwarzenegger said when asked if he would ever run for political office? He faces one big obstacle, however. According to the U.S. Constitution, only citizens who were born in the United States are eligible to be president. Although Schwarzenegger became a citizen in 1983, he was born in Austria. A change, or amendment, to the constitution has been proposed that would make it possible for anyone who has been a U.S. citizen for at least twenty years to seek the presidency. And, as Ah-nuld has proven time and again, anything is possible.

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## User Contributions:

1 **ksakakini** May 31, 2007 @ 2:14 pm  
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Arnold was and still the spiritual father for the bodybuilders around the world. Personally speaking, when I saw his film "Conan" I decided to take up bodybuilding . I'm fond of it especially that I look like him. I wish him more success.

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