

Cliff Harrington – A Memoir
by Allan Murphy & Graham Bathgate

**Movie Extra in the 1960s,
Celebrity interviewer in the '70s,
Teacher in the '80s**



Cliff Harrington interviews Robert Mitchum in Tokyo, 1974

In the 1980s and '90s Cliff Harrington was teaching English in Tokyo. When we used to go out drinking with him he had many a good tale to tell. His stories of meeting famous figures piqued our interest; we interviewed him two times. (*See / hear excerpt here*).

After a couple of *chu-hais*, his favourite tippie, Cliff loved to tell about the celebrities he had interviewed in the 1970s and '80s. He said that his best was Sophia Loren, a real “gentlewoman”. There was also Robert Mitchum (“Call me Bob.”), Ray Charles, John McEnroe, Charlton Heston and even a brief brush with Mohammed Ali.

In the 1960s Cliff acted as an extra in more than a hundred films shot in Tokyo. He especially enjoyed working at the Nikkatsu studios. After 35 years in Japan Cliff left Tokyo to live in Seattle for 8 years with his wife, Tomoko. Several years before his death in 2013, at the age of 80, they returned to Japan to live in Kyushu. The boxes of Cliff’s articles and photos that Tomoko has given us have been of great help.

Cliff taught mainly adult students wanting general conversation practice. He would teach in the mornings at our school in Jimbocho in central Tokyo, near the Budokan, where the Beatles played in 1966. Then, he would dash off to a nearby office to put together articles for various magazines in the USA. In the evening he was back at our English Language school again for 3 hours work.

While his Tokyo life consisted mainly of teaching and interviews, in his early years in Japan he had made trips for assignments to Borneo and the Antarctic. He had also been a movie extra and a voice actor. When he wrote for Japanese newspapers, Cliff would use pseudonyms. For the Asahi Evening News he was Alex Blaine; for the Mainichi Daily News he became Les Gibbons, and for the Daily Yomiuri he was known as Syd Porter.

We are pleased to be able to work on a memoir of Cliff Harrington: actor, journalist, traveller, interviewer, teacher and friend. If you're interested in some unique early interviews with film stars visiting Tokyo, this memoir will fascinate you. It should be available at the end of 2017.

Please click on the link below to read Cliff's story published in "Forty Stories of Japan":

[**My Tokyo Interviews \(PDF, 94KB\)**](#)

Cliff Harrington meets Sophia Loren, Ray Charles, Charlton Heston / Story "My Tokyo Interviews"



Cliff Harrington enjoying talking to Sophia Loren who in turn looks as if she's enjoying the interview (May 1975, Hotel Okura).



Cliff with Ray Charles, possibly the Keio Plaza Hotel, Tokyo, 1976



Cliff is pleased to meet Charlton Heston, The Imperial Hotel, 1976