

James Hubert Pierce
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James Hubert Pierce (August 8, 1900 - December 11, 1983) was the fourth actor to portray [Tarzan](#) on film. Big Jim Pierce, as he was known to family and friends, was born in Freedom, Indiana. He was an [All-American center](#) on the [Indiana Hoosiers football](#) team. Following his graduation in 1921, he coached high school football in [Arizona](#), and began acting in his spare time. After he was cast in the 1923 production of *The Deerslayer*, he remained in [California](#) and coached football at [Glendale High School](#) (one of his players was [John Wayne](#)).

Pierce's life changed when he attended a party given by [Edgar Rice Burroughs](#) and his daughter Joan. Burroughs, the creator and author of the [Tarzan](#) books, immediately wanted Pierce to star in the next Tarzan movie. Pierce gave up a role in the film *Wings* to accept the Tarzan role. His part in *Wings* was given to a newcomer named [Gary Cooper](#). The silent Tarzan film Burroughs talked him into accepting was released in 1927 by [RKO Radio Pictures](#), and entitled *Tarzan and the Golden Lion*.

Joan Burroughs and James Pierce married on Pierce's 28th birthday, August 8, 1928. From 1932 to 1936, James and Joan Pierce were the voices of Tarzan and Jane on national radio in *Tarzan*. They remained married until Joan's death in 1972. Both are buried in [Shelbyville, Indiana](#), and their tombstones bear the inscriptions Tarzan and Jane. They had a daughter Joanne II Anselmo née Pierce (1930–2005) and a son James Michael Pierce (1935–1984).

Pierce is also remembered for playing [Prince Thun](#) of the lion men in the 1936 [movie serial](#) [Flash Gordon](#). He acted in small roles in several films, mostly [westerns](#), through 1951, and worked in a lucrative real estate agency in the [San Fernando Valley](#). He was an accomplished pilot, active during [World War II](#) with the [National Airmen's Reserve](#), the forerunner of today's [Air National Guard](#).

For many years, near the end of his life, Pierce attempted, to no avail, to find a print of *Tarzan and the Golden Lion*, which was thought lost. After his death, a copy was found in a foreign archive.