



In a prison escape scene, Bob Rose took a bump on the head with a rubber revolver, then fell 30 feet into a moving automobile.

By Paul Harrison
HOLLYWOOD.

MOVIE stunt men are a dying race. In fact, more than 100 have died, violently, at their trade. And newly developed tricks of photography leave little to be done by the few daredevils who remain.

So pretty soon there won't be any stunt men. Only bump men. There's a big difference.

"Bump man" is the term ordinarily applied to a person who does comedy falls, takes beatings, and performs other doubling duties which, though they may not be pleasant, are neither difficult nor hazardous. "Bump man" also is the term applied by trained, competent stunters to a fool of an amateur.

It's the bump man, usually an extra made reckless by his desperate need for work, who is hastening the extinction of stunt men as a class. He'll offer for \$25 to do a trick which no experienced stunt man, having weighed the risks, would consider for less than \$250.

The bump man may balk at the last minute. He may bungle the trick so that it isn't worth footage in a picture. Or he may try bravely, fail, and break his neck. Except that it's pretty messy and upsetting to the nerves of the rest of the company, nobody really cares whether he breaks his neck. The studio in advance is absolved of all responsibility.

A good source of information about this rivalry—which is almost literally a deadly rivalry—is Bob Rose. Mr. Rose is the dean of all-round stunt men in Hollywood. For 21 years he has been riding horses over cliffs, wrecking automobiles, clambering from plane to plane, and tumbling from the tops of schooner masts.

ROSE has seen plenty of men die, but he himself hasn't even been in a hospital. He has suffered some minor injuries, but never through an error of his own. He is not proud of his courage, but of his skill. He resents the intrusion of foolhardy bunglers into his craft. There's more to his work than the mere risk involved. It requires skill and courage and cold, exact calculation.

Rose estimates that two-thirds of the features made 15 years ago relied on

The STUNT MAN bows to the BUMP MAN



Rose saw an elephant trample the life out of "Curly" Stecker.

exciting action.

Today there are very few, and most of these leave thrill sequences to the miniature experts and specialists in process shots.

This makes for economy, if not for realism. Stunt men are a little piqued because audiences, trained by now to recognize faked thrills, are not more outspokenly critical of palpable fakes.

There are now only eight or 10 qualified stunt men in Hollywood. To try to name them all would invite controversy. Anyway, they include Rose, Frank Clark, ace stunt pilot; Yakima Cannutt, Duke Green, Gordon Cravath, and Cliff Lyons. Many of the famous ones are gone, but Dick Grace is about the only one who has gone the way of his own choosing. He is a writer now. He survived scores of airplane crackups and quit.

ROSE watched Leo Nomis bury himself when his ship wouldn't come out of a spin. He saw Omar Locklear, blinded by floodlights, crash before the cameras. He recalls the deaths of Frank Mays and Major Campbell by faulty parachutes. He remembers Dick Curwood falling from a rope ladder dangling from a plane, and how Gene Perkins missed in a plane-train change because he had an inexperienced pilot.

He saw an elephant trample the life out of "Curly" Stecker. He wore the blood-stained costume in which Jack Silver had miscalculated a dive into water from a train passing over a trestle. Rose dove at the right instant, and came up smiling.

Rose always seems to do things at the right instant. This is mostly due to training—training which bump men never have, and few people in the world can get. Rose has been taking falls and making split-second decisions from the time he was 10.

He was born in Louisville, Ky., and almost as early as that it was decided that Bob would be a jockey. He had two horsey uncles, a trainer and a breeder. He said, "I began riding at 10. I found

that one of the first things a jockey must learn is how to take a fall. The older guys imposed on me because I was the youngest one around the stables. I got the worst horses, and some of them threw me. Even in those days I was a fatalist."

At 15 he was thrown and disabled. When he finally recovered he was too heavy for racing. But he became a trick rider with shows during his summer vacations from school. One summer he had a chance to ride a motorcycle in a carnival motordrome. It was an easy trick, and he stayed with the show.

STAR of the company was a man named Mike who made hot-air balloon ascensions and parachute drops. Rose would take a motorcycle and side car, ride to wherever Mike landed and bring him back to the fair grounds. One afternoon—it was at Dallas—Rose found him lying under one of the big elms by the river. Mike had landed in the tree, fallen out and broken an ankle



Above, Rose is shown diving into the water in a fall, with his horse, from a high cliff.

He said, "Kid, I gotta get somebody to do my act."

Rose said, "I'll do it." He asked all about the parachute rigging, and the balloon, and how to pull the chute shrouds, and how to curl up when he lit. He says he wasn't afraid when he made his first jump.

Rose came to Hollywood. He wanted to be a director, but there was a demand for stunt men. He worked with Eddie Polo, the serial star. He hired Dick Grace to fly for him, and began wing walking, plane changing and parachute jumping. For four and a half years he doubled in all the dangerous stunts done by Ruth Roland, the serial queen. Rose is a small man, and the deception was easy.

Rose has made one concession to the incalculable risks of his profession: he has never married. No company will insure his life. For a stunt man, the responsibility of a wife and family is a serious mental hazard. One of Rose's friends undertook a stunt without sufficient safeguards in order to get money for a wife who was in a hospital. A week later he woke up in the same hospital, a hopeless cripple.



Tussling with a tiger was almost a routine job for the late "Curly" Stecker, one of the ablest of stunt men.