

NEWSREEL MEN UNSUNG HEROES OF FILM FRONT

*Adventurous Business Run Just Like Newspaper;
Olympic Games Kept 'Em Hustling*

BY JOHN SCOTT

There's a group of movie heroes whose praises remain unsung. They save many theater programs from damnation; they picture real-life drama daily for your entertainment. They are the newsreel men.

This group of technicians who, and third, "framed" stunt—human interest shots—in which children are found to have the most appeal to audiences.

function in the background, leaving the spotlight to their brothers in the studios, are the epitome of modesty. "This business isn't as hazardous as people think," one told me. The facts prove otherwise. They lose their health pursuing news pictures in out-of-the-way places of the world. They have their legs broken at rodeos, and their lives threatened by airplanes out of control. "Not as hazardous as people think," he said.

Los Angeles at the present time wavers between second and first place in importance as a news center, the newsreel boys say. Naturally with the Olympic Games of international interest, this city has taken first honors by a large margin during the past few weeks.

In ordinary times the Paramount newsreel branch in Los Angeles sends out approximately 120,000 feet of film per year—60,000 from each of the two trucks stationed in the vicinity. The amount will be increased this year on account of the Games.

Murders they leave untouched for

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NEWSREEL MEN UNsung HEROES

Group of Technicians Proves Epitome of Modesty

Los Angeles Quite Important in Recent Interest

Business Holds Fascination for Its Followers

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the most part, although a few come in for footage. Grewsome details are never included. Pictures of snakes and other horror stuff are usually taboo. Accidents involving the Army and Navy are more or less carefully avoided, although pictures of the Akron tragedy in San Diego were shown in Los Angeles for two or three days before they were taken off by request.

"YOU CAN'T LEAVE IT"

There's a fascination to this newsreel business. Joe Johnson, who works out of Los Angeles, is one veteran who testifies to this, after nineteen years of activity behind the camera.

"It's one of those businesses you can't get out of," he said. "We've had very few fatalities among the boys, although one was killed last year at Daytona Beach by a racing automobile, and another lost his life filming a rocket blast. Some have lost their health chasing news shots in the Orient."

Johnson then broke down and admitted that it was he who suffered the broken leg and back injuries from a bucking horse's kick at a rodeo last year. And he also revealed that two of his fellow-workers narrowly escaped death not so long ago when they were filming an airplane landing. It seems the pilot decided he could not land and attempted to swoop upward. The newsreel truck was directly in his path. The boys, filming the scene and using a long-distance lens, could not judge the distance or the speed of the onrushing plane, and just managed to duck below the wings, which cut off the six camera supports. The film magazine was saved out of the wreckage and the pictures of the crash shown throughout the country. And it's not a hazardous game!

Johnson related how he went after a shot of a daring aviator who believed he could open eleven parachutes between his plane and the ground.

"Five opened," he said briefly. "The man crashed. The pictures were never shown."

When the prison fire and riot took place in Canon City, Colo., the newsreel veteran received a long-distance call from New York, ordering him to charter a plane and fly to the scene with his camera equipment. In thirty-five minutes, Johnson was on his way.

AVOIDING SCOOPS

The newsreel companies will go to extreme measures to escape being "scooped," as revealed by Johnson, who was commissioned to obtain photographs of the famous Japanese earthquake some years ago. A certain amateur photographer caught about 1000 feet of authentic film on the spot and the various organizations started bidding for it. Johnson won out, but he paid \$7500 for the 1000 feet. And he paid cash!

Important shots are rushed to laboratories, developed and the negatives sent by air express to New York headquarters, which, in turn, sends prints to key city exchanges. Competition is keen among the companies to see which can get its product on the screen first. A recent important event in Cuba, for instance, was a shot, rushed by airplane to New York and screened in just a matter of hours.

Sound has added both to the newsreel man's troubles and his enjoyment. No more can he shoulder his camera and travel "light" to the scene of action. His sound truck must go along. But here's a little secret. Sometimes the sound is dubbed in afterward. Cleverly so that you couldn't tell it in a thousand years.

Nowadays the newsreel man can have a little fun. He hires dialect experts sometimes to add a bit of humor to a shot which is made much more effective because of the talk.

The newsreel boys have formed an organization in Los Angeles and carry cards bearing the signatures of officials ranging from Gov. Rolph to the jail turnkey. Special cards were issued for Einstein's arrival, allowing the boys to board the vessel which carried the eminent scientist.

The Olympic Games have kept the men on their toes every minute. Editing formed one of the principal items, since each newsreel sent out contained only about 300 feet of actual athletics. The sound cameras run at the speed of ninety feet per minute, so figure it out for yourself. In slow motion the camera runs at 900 feet per minute and each dive in the swimming stadium filmed in this fashion required about twenty-five feet of film.