

Kirk Douglas Risked Fortune To Make 'Vikings'; Plans Bigger Show

By VERNON SCOTT
United Press International
Hollywood — (UPI) — Kirk Douglas is a plunger in the grand tradition of gambler Nick the Greek.

Actor Douglas put more than \$4 million on the line to produce his new movie and stood to lose every dime he owned — plus several million borrowed dimes. A few weeks before the film, "The Vikings" was released, movietown wise guys were betting he would lose his shirt, socks and money belt when the picture hit the screen.

"This kind of gamble makes Las Vegas seem like child's play," Douglas claims, still somewhat shaken by the ordeal. "All the chips were riding on my belief that we had a hit on our hands." "And we have."

Few independent producers have undertaken as vast a project as the Norse saga, and Douglas was advised by studio bigwigs to scotch the project or risk catastrophe. But Kirk was a man with a mission.

"I've always been entranced by the Vikings," he says, "and I was determined to go ahead with it."

A Shocker
"I'd counted on a \$3 million budget to begin with, but costs got out of hand. We could have cut corners, but I decided we'd do it right, or not at all."

To charges that his film contains an over abundance of gore and brutality, Douglas replied his picture was produced as a fable, added that it was meant to be a shocker.

"However, it's not as shocking as the teen-age switchblade pictures being made these days," he went on. "I abhor violence that can be imitated. No teen-agers will rush out after seeing my picture to buy a sword to cut off his brother's hand, or an eagle to pluck out the eye of an enemy. And the kids love the violence. All children are brought up on brutality from their earliest story books."

"Grimms Fairy Tales, Mother Goose and even Walt Disney capitalized on this. In 'Peter Pan' the hero cuts off Captain Hook's hand and feeds it to a crocodile. Goosy Gander threw a girl down the stairs. And remember 'Jack and Jill' when Jack falls down and breaks his crown?"

Careers at Stake
"So far the film is making money at a fantastic rate. It's broken records in 11 theaters, running between 30 and 40 per cent better than 'Trapeze,' which was United Artists' biggest hit. We could clear \$12 million in the United States alone."

"Sure, I was scared for a while. If 'The Vikings' had bombed I would have given up the ghost of independent production. It could have ruined my whole career."

Would Kirk gamble for such high stakes again?
"You're darn right I will," he concluded. "At the end of this year I'm starting production on 'Spartacus'—about the uprising of the Roman slaves. It will be bigger and more expensive than 'The Vikings.'"

"If you aren't going ahead in this business you're sliding back. And I'm willing to gamble rather than slide."

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Driver Distraction Can Result in Car Accident

Chicago—Everyone knows you can't stop a car on a dime.

But do you realize just exactly how far your car does travel before it can be stopped?

"It's a lot further than you may think," the National Safety Council says.

Tests show it takes the average driver, under most conditions, about three-fourths of a second to react to an emergency and hit his brakes.

At 15 m.p.h., in the time it takes to react, you've already traveled at least 17 feet — theoretically, over three six feet-tall men. It takes another 14 feet — about two more six-footers — to bring your car to a halt. That's a total of five six-footers you've run over — and at only 15 m.p.h.!

Most motorists, though, don't drive quite that slow. Let's assume you usually whiz along at, say 60 m.p.h. A pretty reasonable speed, you'd say.

Keep your eyes on the road and reach for a cigarette lighter. Put the cigarette in your mouth, glance down and flick the lighter. That flick and initial puff on the cigarette took about two seconds. During that time, you traveled at least 176 feet — more than half the distance of a football field.

If you saw an accident situation ahead after looking up and hit the brakes immediately, before you could stop your car would have traveled 366 feet further—equal to another football field, and then some.

Everyone Distracted
Your trouble may not be lighting cigarettes. But everyone's distracted sometime or other by something in the car. Best protection is to be alert, and to hold down your speed so if you do face a situation, you'll have time to stop safely.

If you do find yourself facing an emergency, you'll be better able to stop in time if your tires and brakes are in good condition. An emergency is no time for added problems.

If, despite all your precautions, you find yourself in an emergency, remember this tip: Better that you head for the ditch than ram an oncoming car.

"Stay alert — stay alive," the Council says, and "Think ahead."

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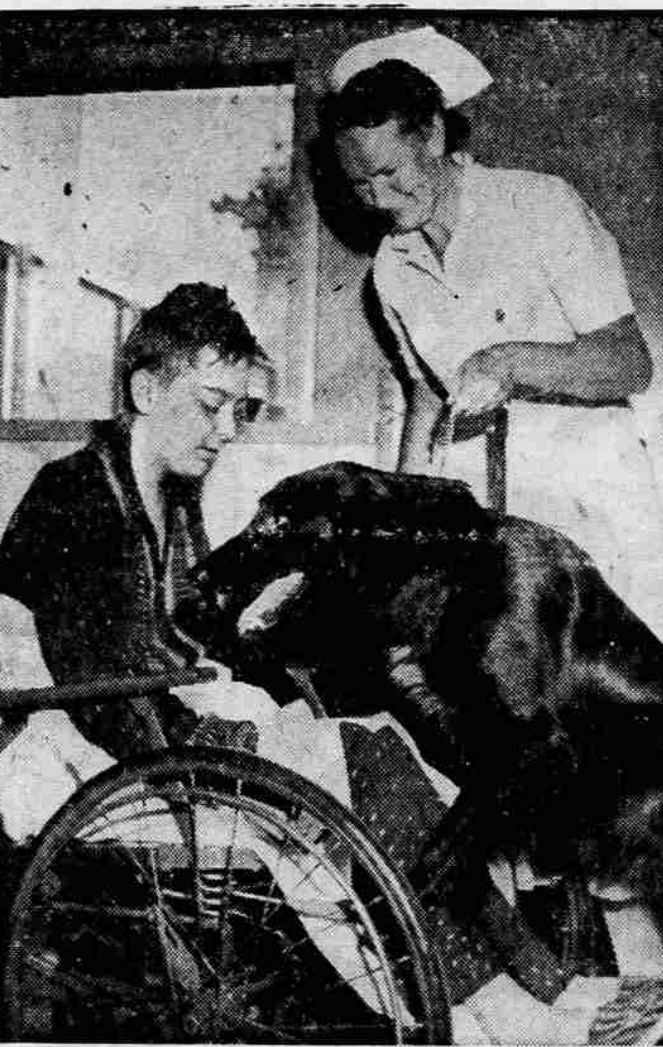
Parents' Orders Terminate Venture

Traverse City, Mich. — (UPI) Dick Lievense's unusual business venture was thriving until orders from his parents ended the swapping.

Dick, 11, son of a state conservation department fisheries supervisor, was trading garter snakes to his friends.

During a week-end visit near Jackson, Mich., Dick found the nest of 30 garter snakes which he took back to his Traverse City home.

Until his parents called a halt to the snake-swapping, Dick had acquired a bicycle light, ball of silicon putty, roll of tape, marbles, marble bag, tape measure, magnet, bottle of glue, balloons and 35 cents in cash.



REUNION—Paul Hearn, 14, dying of leukemia in a San Francisco hospital, wanted more than anything else in the world to have his two dogs, Dawn and Dusk, who had been left behind at his family's home in Staten Island, N. Y. Nurse Mary Herscuth got various kennel clubs in the Bay Area to pool enough money to have the dogs flown out here, and here Paul is shown with Dusk and Mrs. Herscuth at the reunion.

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Selma Man Enters Plea In Circuit Court

R. W. Akers Jr., Selma, pleaded guilty in circuit court Tuesday to a grand jury indictment on uttering and publishing a false check.

A pre-sentence report has been ordered and bail reduced to \$500, according to the district attorney's office.

CIVIL ENGINEER DIES

Philadelphia — (UPI) — Frank M. Weaver, 79, retired civil engineer and industrialist who helped design the Philadelphia subway system, died Tuesday.

Power production in New England went up to an all-time regional high of 26 billion kilowatt hours during 1957, a gain of 1.5 billion over the previous year.



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Prints Reveal Exhibit Popularity

Chicago — (UPI) — Dr. Austin L. Rand, chief curator of zoology at Chicago's Natural History Museum, says visitors leave telltale marks of their preferences all over the place.

"The nose prints and the fingerprints that visitors leave in the museum are the best clues we have to the popularity of our exhibits," he explained.

He illustrated the point by a comparison of the number of prints found on the case housing the stuffed figure of the famed gorilla, Bushman, and its neighbor which contains a family of hyraxes — timid, rabbit-like creatures from Abyssinia.

The glass around Bushman fills up with prints pretty quickly, while there is "rarely a print" on the hyraxes' case, he said.

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by Marjorie Thorne

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