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INTERNATIONAL

Film News

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## Reynolds recounts close calls

By VARIETY STAFF

Nobody has more respect for stuntmen than Burt Reynolds. That's partly because he played one in the 1978 hit "Hooper," and because he's a longtime pal of stuntman-turned-director Hal Needham. But mostly it's because the star has done a fair share of "gags" himself, sometimes with near-fatal consequences.

"Sometimes the simplest stunt can be the most dangerous," Reynolds says. "Everyone's in a hurry on a movie set and faster is better, but you can't rush stunts. You've got to take your time and eyeball them and really get a good sense that everyone can come out the other end safely."

He adds that he thinks sets have gotten safer because of (the "Twilight Zone" accident), "but I think if that if that incident hadn't happened, it would've gotten more and more dangerous until something like that happened."

The actor/director talked with Variety about his various broken bones, burns and near-misses.

\*"Operation CIA" (1965). Hands tied behind his back, Reynolds struggles to free himself as a venomous cobra writhes on the floor. "Of course, the cobra doesn't know what the choreography is, and he just headed me off and raised up. Thank God, one of (the crew) there grabbed it by the neck, because it would've bit me, for sure."

\* "Deliverance" (1972). Shooting the river rapids, Reynolds was ejected from his canoe, breaking his tailbone on the rocks, and flung downstream.

"It took off all my clothes, including these high-top boots I had on. A 35-year-old guy who was in great shape (went) over the waterfall and (the crew) looked down about a half a mile downstream and this nude 80-year-old guy was crawling back."

\* "City Heat" (1984). During a fight scene, another actor hit Reynolds in the face with a metal chair, breaking his jaw. The result: chronic pain that led to a near-fatal dependence on prescription pills.

"After that, I was very adamant about the preparation of stunts with directors, some of whom probably thought I was being overly cautious or maybe not as brave as I was supposed to be. But there's just no reason to get hurt on a picture."

\* "Evening Shade" (1991). Baby powder shot from a prop fire extinguisher ignited, setting Reynolds on fire.

"My entire face and head were in flames. If you see the shot, you say, 'He's dead,' but my eyebrows were singed, and that's about it."

-- Todd Longwell

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