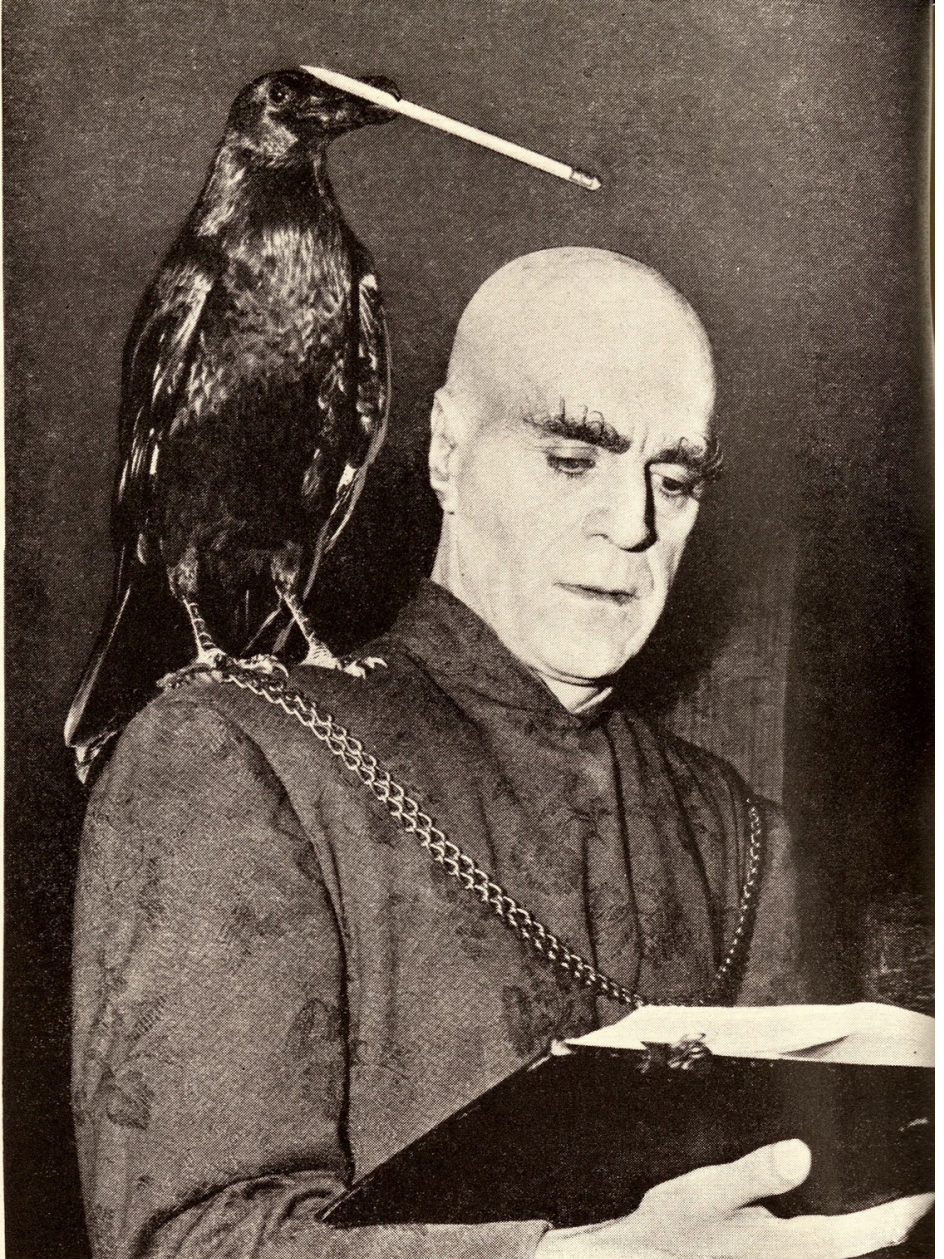


ANIMAL EXTRAS FOR HOLLYWOOD

by **FRANK CUNNINGHAM**

Hollywood Editor, Sertain Feature Syndicate.

The thrilling story of Curly Twiford and his famous rental zoo of Hollywood. "If it lives, we have it"—is the Twiford slogan.



Jimmy, one of Twiford's rented ravens, acts out a scene with Boris Karloff in "Tower of London."

CURLY TWIFORD wonders what he'd be doing now if he hadn't answered a call to repair a stalled car on Curly's final day in the garage business, back around the depression swamped times of 1932. Final day in the garage business? Yes. Curly was awaiting a call from the sheriff as his business was flatter than a prosperity joke.

Garageman Twiford, while he was working on the motor, heard the whimpering of a dog. After the car was started and the autoist on his way, Curly investigated the whimpering, discovered a half starved dog and a brood of puppies under an abandoned building.

Curly knew what it was to be in trouble. Especially on that day when his business career was scheduled to fold up. So Curly took the dogs from under the building and carried them home. And the funny thing about all this is that his business didn't fold up that day. Instead it had a new birth. Oh, no, Curly Twiford didn't know about it at the time. But now he realizes it was for the best.

Let's take a jaunt out to the Twiford Brothers animal ranch ("If it's alive we have it") north of Hollywood and a few hundred yards from the Universal Studios; there to talk to Curly, a medium height somewhat husky man dressed in rough trousers and a blue work shirt.

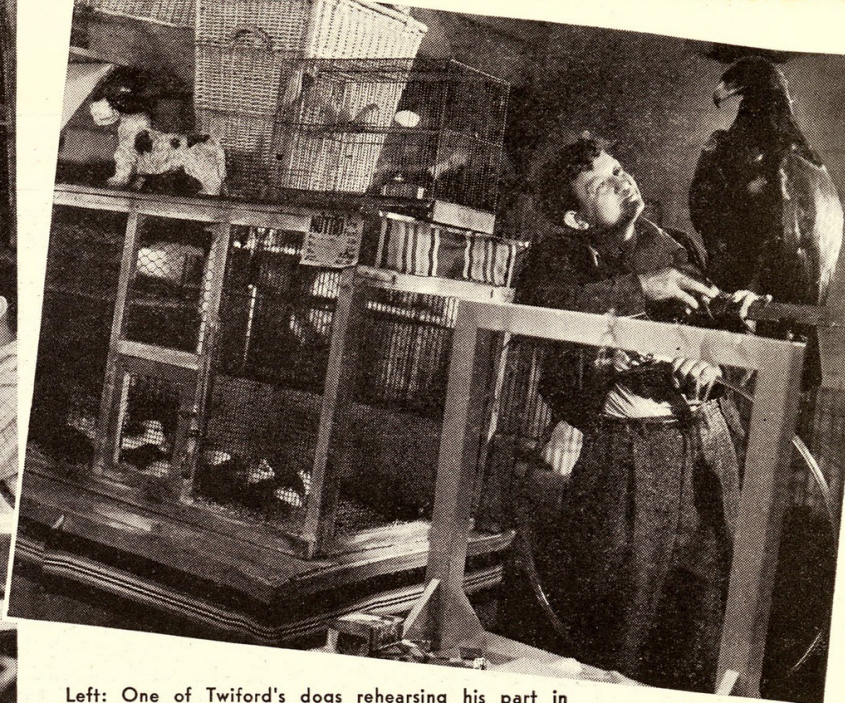
"That day years ago was the turning point in my life," Curly confirms. "I left a dead garage business and found myself with a lot of half dead dogs. I gave away all the dogs except one runty female whom I named Squeezit. I began to teach Squeezit tricks in my spare time and 'spare time' meant most of my time. Then a neighbor gave me a pair of sick love birds and I brought them back to health, taught them to sit on Squeezit's head.

"On my rounds of the studios looking for work I took them with me. Finally, one day I got a call from a studio. Not for me, mind you, but for the dog and the love birds. That's how I got started training animals and birds for the moving pictures, an entirely new career."

From a stray dog and a pair of love birds, Twiford has built a business that furnishes animals of all kinds—except for the large creatures such as elephants and camels—to the movie studios. His pets have been seen in photoplays almost by the hundreds and they have brought him checks for a day's work up to \$500. For "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" Columbia hired every "critter" he had on the lot. His business has grown so much that his brother Dave had to come down from the Pacific northwest to help him and the Twiford Brothers have 150 pets back of the blue painted front of their establishment.

But after all, anyone can get a collection of 150 pets if he has the money to buy them. But not everyone can take 150 pets and make each of them a trained performer.

Curly took a rat, named her Josephine Beach and taught her so well she draws down from \$25 to \$50 a day for studio work. Even his lesser rats get around \$10 a day and, as far as I know, none of



Left: One of Twiford's dogs rehearsing his part in "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington." Right: Curly Twiford gives last instructions to one of his star eagles.

them has kicked about the wages. What do the rats—and they are the kind that never make Winchell's column—do in pictures?

Well, suppose the script calls for a scene showing a rat leading a horde of other rats out of a gassed trench in a war shot. Curly teaches the leader to do this by locking the rat's food inside a cage at feeding time and locking the rat outside. After a few days of practice the rat doesn't waste any time getting to his cage. When the shooting comes around, the rat and his pals are placed in the trench on the set; the cage put outside the range of the camera. When the leader is released the "big parade" is on as the rats rush for the food!

Sometimes star Josephine has to act with famous names and it is Curly's duty to make certain that Josephine doesn't take a nip out of a star to find out if a stellarite tastes just about like a normal person. So far, Curly hasn't had any trouble. As a precaution Curly always has some cheese or some other natural bait around so that the star's flesh isn't the most appealing thing. If I wanted to make a "crack" I could say the rat prefers cheese to "ham"!

PROBABLY the biggest name in Curly's collection is Jimmy. Movie property people everywhere know this remarkable raven who has been seen in scores of movies and who earns the not so small salary of \$50 a day. Curly found Jimmy, half starved, on the desert. The raven now can type, open letters, light a cigarette, operate a cash register and, if he were able to talk, could probably even tell the fate of Europe. Perhaps you'll see Jimmy soon. That is, if you happen to catch "Tower of London" in which Jimmy and Boris Karloff share some scenes, or Shirley Temple's new picture "The Blue Bird".

Four year old Jimmy is one of Curly's most consistent performers; however, in

"Tower of London" Jimmy went temperamental for the first time.

"I guess Jimmy didn't like it because I gave him a stand-in," Curly explained as we stood outside a cage and I looked at a raven that is smart enough to earn fifty bucks a day—something Poe's Raven never did!

Curly went on, "I thought that I could use Koko, an older raven, as Jimmy's stand-in, for Koko needs more training. But when Koko was perched on Karloff's stand-in's shoulder Jimmy sulked.

When the actual "take" came and the cameras started rolling Jimmy, to show his disapproval of Koko's presence, left Karloff's shoulder, flew to the top of the sound stage. I had to climb up the catwalks and coax him down. Not until I put Koko back in his cage did Jimmy return to Karloff's shoulder!"

Twiford had been training Jimmy since the raven was seven months old and that was the bird's first defiance of his master's orders. Wow! Hollywood must be some place when ravens develop temperament.

When script writers think up scenes requiring trick animal shots, Curly adds some nice sized checks to his bankroll. For example, in "She Had to Eat" Curly had to teach a rabbit to "chase" a bulldog. To do this Curly took a 28 pound Flemish giant and a friendly looking bulldog and had them meet formally.

As the days passed, he brought them closer and closer together. The day arrived when they were put in the same cage. Curly kept a careful watch for several weeks to see that his rabbit didn't turn magician and do a disappearing act—inside the bulldog. However, the caution was unnecessary as the animals became friends. Curly then taught the dog to run away from the rabbit and the rabbit to follow the dog. When this scene appears on the screen it seems as if the rabbit is actually chasing the dog.

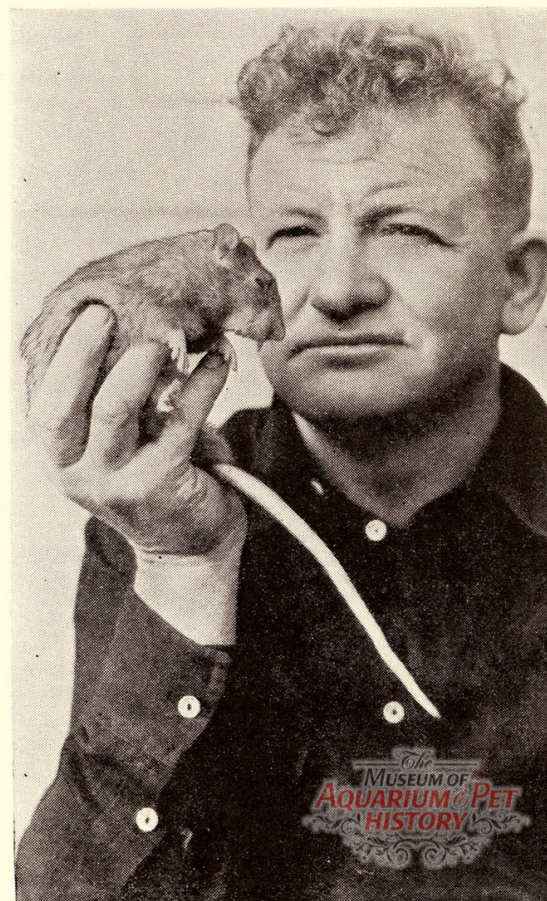
The trainer wasn't so sure the act

would go off as he planned and Curly went so far as to educate a "double", another hare, in case the first rabbit was "lost in action". But the first rabbit and the dog became such companions that Curly had to keep them in the same cage even after the "chase" was recorded on celluloid.

The Twiford brothers get results with their animals because they realize that patience and kindness are the only methods of successful training. "I didn't have this patience at first, but I've

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Twiford checks up on his famous rat, "Josephine," who earns \$25-\$50 per day.



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learned it," Curly commented. "I talk with a raven or a crow or a rabbit or even a bush dog as if it were a human being," Curly said as we looked at a South American bush dog which had just come back to its cage from an appearance before the cameras in Famous Productions' "Green Hell," which, as it has a South American locale, must have made the bush dog feel at home.

"This bush dog," Curly continued, "is as tame as any house pet. I got him from the captain of a ship that came into Los Angeles harbor. The animal just scampers around his cage and grins most of the time.

"But let's get back to the training," Curly spoke as we turned away from the bush dog's cage. "I have never yet resorted to cruelty or force to train my animals. Why, if I'd so much as hit Jimmy the raven he'd probably have his feelings so hurt he'd take the first opportunity to fly away. Ravens, by the way, are smarter than any other animal or bird. Actually, I don't have to train them. I show them what to do and they copy it. Better yet, they don't forget a trick once they've learned it."

SPEAKING about Jimmy flying away, some of Curly's animals did find a hole in the fence and make a dash for freedom. The culprits were two foxes, two coyotes, and two raccoons. Curly was worried for fear they might get run over or else hurt someone in the neighborhood who might scare them—or whom they might scare. When dawn came up, probably not like thunder, Curly was ready to send out a searching party when he heard a resounding racket at his front door. Going there, he found that scratching on the screen and howling with all their might were two foxes, two coyotes, and two raccoons. They had come back for breakfast!

"This business is funny," Curly commented. "We have to teach rabbits and turtles and foxes to do the same things that people do. It is essential that we educate eagles and falcons to 'time' their movements when they are before a camera so perfectly that a 'take' will not be spoiled.

"This is where so many animal men fall down. And, believe me, plenty of people go in the animal business and make a failure of it. Getting studio checks is no sinecure. An animal man may be able to get a first check from a studio, but to stay in business he must get the repeat orders. And that's what we've been able to do.

"Sometimes the studios call on me for animals I don't have. In anticipation of this I have made up a list of all the trained animals around southern California. If the animal called for is on that list we go out and rent one ourselves.

"For 'Stanley and Livingstone,' the 20th Century-Fox studio called on me for 20,000 ants. Can you imagine that?

20,000 ants! I gathered my aides and we trekked over to Death Valley and the Mojave Desert. We put 56 glass jars over the ant holes and, after a while, started back to Hollywood with the 20,000 ants.

"On Sundays we often go into the desert and mountains, hunting animals which we will later train. Also we keep in touch with trappers.

"One of my most unusual orders was for ten live catfish for a film company. There is none near Hollywood nor Los Angeles and I finally had to send men nearly 500 miles to the Sacramento river. After the fish and game commission gave the men a permit, the ten catfish were on their way to Hollywood. All this involved plenty of trouble, but each fish brought me \$25 from the picture people."

Curly Twiford doesn't want anyone to get the impression that he's "getting rich" off this business which started, as he states it, "on a dime and a pair of overalls." His feed bill runs as high as \$25 a day and there is an appreciable overhead. The Twiford brothers, though, are said to be making an excellent income off their animals and are continually improving their equipment.

Right now, Curly is building an aviary so that admirers who come to his place on Sundays can watch his birds perform. Curly merely wants a place where his "leading lights" of the animal world can meet their fans.

THE placing of animals in pictures isn't Curly's only interest in them. He sees to their welfare as a matter of personal pride. Now that he is building his own cages, Curly has learned that animals with padded feet are better off with cages that have wire bottoms instead of wooden floors. By trying the same animals in both kinds of cages, Curly found out that those who live in the mesh wire bottomed cages don't lose their hair, suffer far less from distemper.

About the time we were looking at a brown sable and a blue sable rabbit—Curly had bred them—Dave came up with a parrot sitting on his arm. The parrot was busy pulling the hairs on Dave's arm with his beak.

"The parrot wants me to scratch his back," Dave explained as he suited his actions to his statement. When the scratching was finished, the parrot carefully scratched Dave's arm for a few moments. "Just paying me back for a favor," Dave commented as he playfully cuffed the bird. "The bird wants to stay with me all the time. And don't you try to take him off my arm or he'll nip you plenty. He would be protecting me from you." Dave laughed. The parrot wasn't occupying all my attention, though, as I was busy avoiding stepping on the turtles, ducks, and other creatures which were roaming the place.

Yes, a thriving business is the reward that Curly Twiford received for rescuing a bedraggled group of puppies. Today Curly has a business respected by the studios and one that is paying far more dividends than his garage business paid even in its best days.

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