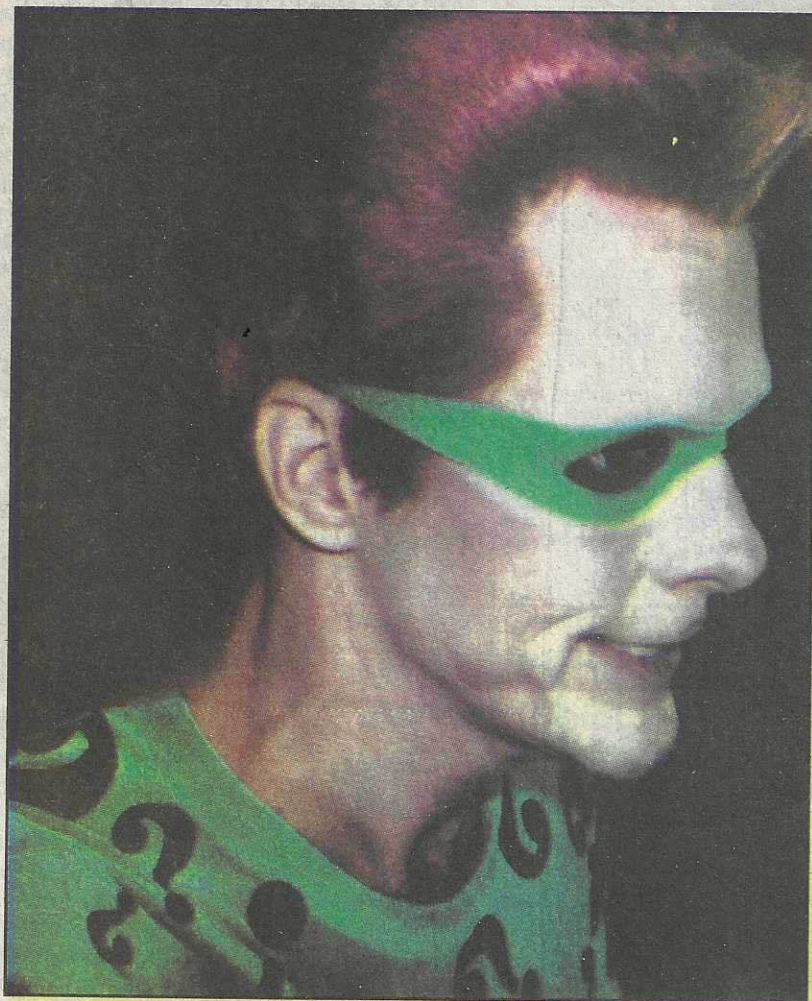


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DOUBLE TAKE



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Mattoon native: 'I kind of fell into' stunt work

Saturday, November 11, 1995

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Every mother worries about her children, but Babs Robinson has better cause for concern than most.

You see, her son, Allen, lists high falls, car hits and stairfalls under the "Special Skills" heading on his resume.

In a recent trip to Mattoon to visit his mother, stunt man Allen Robinson spent some time discussing different types of stunt work, how long it takes to film stunt sequences and what it was like to spend two hours a day in makeup with Jim Carrey.

Robinson, who started in the stunt business nearly 11 years ago, says he was always interested in stunts, but didn't know how to get initial work.

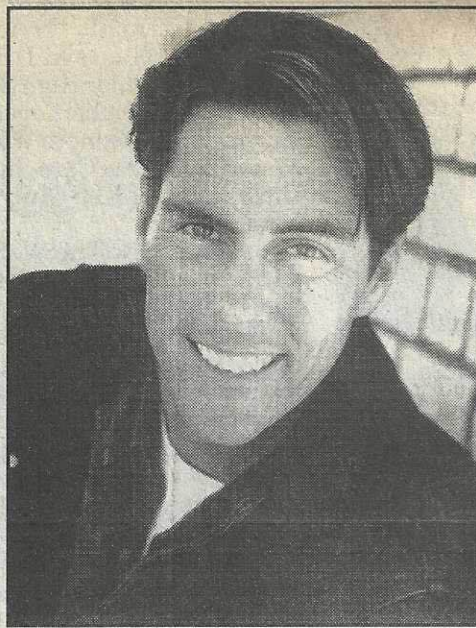
"I kind of fell into it," he says, then pauses at length while a wry grin spans his face. "I love that line."

In 1985, the lanky Los Angeles resident lassoed himself a role in a live-action cowboy show.

The work was grueling, 14 shows a day, and the \$200 per week pay was low, considering the pratfalls Robinson's body had to endure. For additional money, Robinson would do cast members' laundry at the end of each week.

Despite graduating to commercials (McDonalds, Allstate Insurance), television ("Walker: Texas Ranger") and films ("Psycho 4: The Beginning," "Parent-hood"), Robinson said the live action shows were a bit more glamorous.

"In the live shows, people applaud and really cheer for you," he says. "In film, you maybe get a pat on the back."



Allen Robinson

This is not to say that film work is without its advantages.

"You get better accommodations, better food and better money."

As Robinson pulls some pictures of himself in Riddler regalia from "Batman Forever" out of a folder, he adds, "It's also neat being part of something so big — something with a big budget."

No stranger to the blockbuster, Robinson doubled for Tom Hanks in the running and swimming scenes of "Forrest Gump," and was Carrey's stunt doppelganger in the most recent Batman film.

"I got to wear the green costume and sit in makeup with Jim Carrey for two

hours a day," Robinson recalls.

As for what it was like to sit next to a movie star who is making a reported \$20 million for his next project, Robinson shrugs and says, "He was just an average guy."

"(Actors) are just like you and I," he adds. "They've got a craft and a job to do — they just make more money."

But his respect for these A-list actors as average working Joes has caused Robinson to "miss some really cool photo opportunities," he jokes.

Robinson will have a chance to make up for previously missed celebrity shots when he doubles for Carrey again in the upcoming "Cable Guy" and works as an Italian gangster in the much-anticipated Bruce Willis film "Welcome to Jericho."

Although Robinson is a member of the Screen Actors Guild and has appeared in a couple of blockbusters, he says work doesn't always come easy.

"When you're in stunts, you have to get your own work," he explains. "It's up to me to meet stunt coordinators, producers and directors."

"I don't have an agent."

What Robinson does have is extensive experience in a variety of stunt work, including skydiving, bungee jumping, repelling, scuba diving and balloon piloting. But he doesn't necessarily consider himself a daredevil.

Robinson says safety always comes first, and there are some stunts he refuses to execute.

"People have creative minds," he says with a chuckle. "Someone'll say, 'We want you to fall 1,000 feet naked, handcuffed and blindfolded.'"

Put on the shirt, George, and e

If you stopped by this space the other day, you read a conversation with Bob Seger, the great rock-and-roll singer from Detroit. Seger just turned 50. Once, when we were both younger, he told me a story that has stuck in my mind.

He was telling me why he never wanted to go on television:

"If I were to go on a talk show, I wouldn't know what to say. I don't know how I would explain my life in eight minutes. I remember once I heard that (John) Lennon and (Paul) McCartney were going to be on the 'Tonight Show,' and I got real excited, and I stayed up to watch it. ... and Johnny Carson wasn't even there that night.

"He was off, and Joe Garagiola was the guest host, and here were John Lennon and Paul McCartney trying to make jokes with Garagiola. It made me sad to watch it. I don't think I could do that. It would seem to trivialize everything that I think I am."

But the world changes, and we grow older; Seger changed his mind, and did,

indeed, make some television appearances over the years.

What made me think about this is that, the day after I spoke with Seger last week, the Beatles appeared on the cover of Newsweek. "Meet the Beatles (Again)" was the coverline, accompanied by a 1964-era black-and-white photograph of the band.

The reason the Beatles were on the cover of the magazine is that in November ABC television will broadcast, over three nights, a documentary about the band — authorized by the band — that is expected to get huge ratings.

The television shows are supposed to be the first step in a series of marketing maneuvers designed to make the three surviving Beatles a great deal of money — the figure that keeps getting tossed around is \$100 million. There will be new songs, there will be CDs, there will be videotapes, there may even be a tour.

The Beatles appeared on the cover of Newsweek one other time — in 1964. Their presence on the cover of a news-



Bob
Greene

Greene is
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magazine that year was the stuff of study-hall conversation all across the U.S. Boiled down to a phrase or two, the surprised reaction of young Americans was: "Can you believe it? The Beatles are on the cover of Newsweek!"

Indeed it was a startling sight, 31 years ago. The covers of Time and Newsweek were supposed to be reserved for the likes of Lyndon Johnson and Charles DeGaulle; that the editors of one of those magazines had chosen to put the Beatles on the cover seemed an amazing fact.

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Robinson was the stunt double for Tom Hanks in "Forrest Gump."

"My job is to find ways to make the stunts work safely."

Which can be difficult to do when more than a day's worth of shooting is sometimes required to capture a specific stunt sequence. But Robinson says he has never been seriously injured.

"It can get tough shooting for that long, but everyone is professional and knows their limitations. The conditions are very safe."

Robinson is also experienced in different types of stunt work. Stunts, he explains, are broken down into three separate categories.

The first is a stunt double, a person who doubles for a particular actor in cer-

tain situations (such as Robinson's scenes for Hanks in "Forrest Gump"). The second category is stunt actors, where the stunt person actually has a small role.

ND, or non-descript, stunts is the final branch of stunt work; fairly self-explanatory, ND stunts include any general stunt work.

Robinson, 36, is also expanding his horizons into coordinating stunt work for commercials, TV and film.

"It's sort of the natural next step," Robinson says. "And after awhile, your body just can't take this anymore."

"I have to admit, though, it's a lot of fun."

orge, and enjoy the memories



Bob Greene

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Now such a fact is not amazing at all — it is quite predictable. "The Beatles exist apart from my Self," George Harrison explained to Newsweek in 1995 (the interview was conducted via fax). "I am not really 'Beatle George.' 'Beatle George' is like a suit or shirt that I once wore on occasion and until the end of my life people may see that shirt and mistake it for me."

For \$100 million, it's a mistake that Harrison and his singing colleagues apparently are willing to put up with. As they should. They have nothing to be embarrassed about — what they did when they were young was wonderful, and if they're merchandising the memories now ... well, they were merchandisers back then, too, although they might not have been quite so aware of it, and besides, the merchandising business is not necessarily a venal pursuit. Shoddy goods get sold all the time, but so do goods of great value. Who better to sell the real goods than the people who created them?

If you look closely at stories aimed at Americans in their 40s and 50s — the

study-hall Americans who gazed in disbelief at the 1964 Newsweek Beatles cover — you'll find a lot of "Still" and "Is Back" headlines.

Examples: "(Fill in the name of the singer or actor) Is Still Making Hearts Melt." Or: "(Fill in the name of the singer or actor) Is Back." But the person who "is back" usually hasn't been anywhere, and the person who is still doing something ... well, that's hardly news.

The reason the stories are written is to make that audience — the men and women in their 40s and 50s — feel that things are unchanged and all right and steady, in a world that isn't always that way. Nothing so very wrong with that.

"Until the end of my life people may see that shirt and mistake it for me," said George Harrison (still George Harrison, George Harrison is back). "I don't know how I would explain my life in eight minutes," Bob Seger said. But he doesn't have to. No one does. You are given a whole lifetime in which to explain.