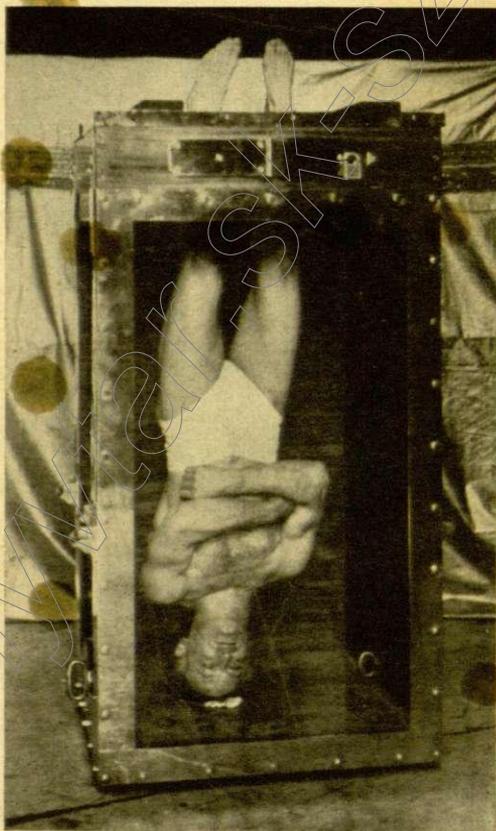
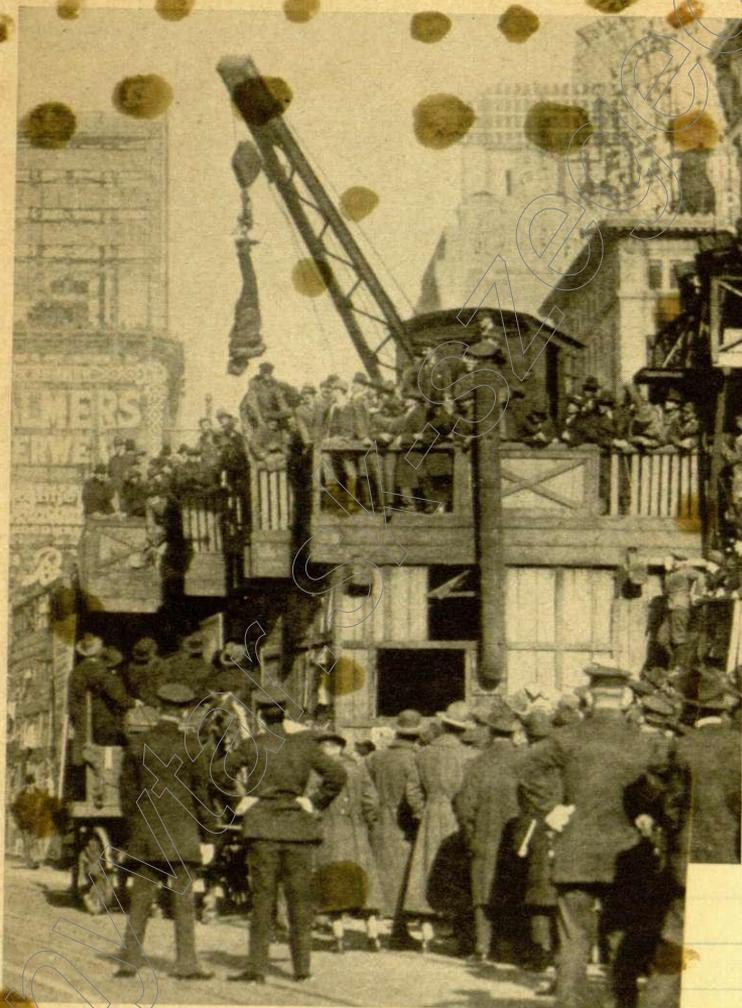


THE GREAT HOUDINI



REAL HOUDINI invented the water torture act, which called for the magician to escape from a sealed water-filled box before his breath gave out.

Houdini CONTINUED



STRAIT-JACKET STUNT was performed by Houdini for a New crowd. Houdini used to offer such exhibitions free to attract attention rebuff scoffers who claimed his acts were based on illusion. In this on hanging upside down from a derrick and wriggling his way out of strait





TRIAL BY WATER involved being let down to bottom of New York Harbor after being stripped, chained and put into a large chest which then had its cover nailed down and a steel band fastened around it. Houdini came up in 57 seconds. The chest was hauled up with its nails and band still in place.



TRIAL BY MILK CAN involved immersing magician in a large can filled with water or, in cities with publicity-conscious dairy companies, with milk. The can was then secured with a dozen padlocks. Houdini would make his way out in a minute, leaving padlocks intact and the can filled to the brim.

MRS. HOUDINI WAS IN THE ACT



REAL MRS. HOUDINI married magician in early days of his career.

The real Houdini was a model family man. His wife helped him in his acts in the early days, took care of his practical needs all his life. Just as he spent years testing mediums because he wanted to get in touch with his dead mother, she sought for 17 years after his death to communicate with him beyond the grave. The long history of their marital devotion makes an engaging background for the Houdini tricks in the movie. The producer added another engaging touch by having Mrs. Houdini played, logically enough, by Janet Leigh, the real-life Mrs. Tony Curtis.



MOVIE LEVITATION ACT is performed at a restaurant where magician's wife stretches out in mid-air with no other apparent support than a broom.





QUICK-CHANGE ACT is performed by movie Mrs. Houdini who changes her clothes backstage so that she can impersonate her husband when he fails to turn up in time for his act, having experienced a slight delay in escaping from Tower of London while picking its locks with a wire held by two of his toes.

Houdini (Paramount) dramatizes the life of Master Magician Harry Houdini,* famed for his escapes from strait jackets, handcuffs, jail cells and locked and sealed containers of all kinds. Unfortunately, this account of the Houdini story fails to escape from the conventional, romanticized film-biography formula.

* Real name: Ehrich Weiss. He was the son of an Appleton, Wis. rabbi.

In rich Technicolor, the Houdini career is followed from struggling carnival magician to the world's best known illusionist. The movie ends with his death in 1926 at the age of 52 while he was suspended upside down in a strait jacket in a huge tank of water (actually, Houdini died in a hospital of peritonitis). Other highlights: his arrest in Germany on the charge that his act was a fraud and his acquittal after demonstrating his abilities in a courtroom; his escapes from a strait jacket while dangling from a Times Square building, from a packing case lowered into the icy Detroit River, from an "escape-proof"



CURTIS & LEIGH
One cute trick after another.

cell in the Tower of London; his attempts, after the death of his mother, to communicate with her through mediums and his subsequent campaign to expose spiritualists as fakes.

The picture makes no attempt to give away any of the secrets of Houdini's feats. In the title role, Tony Curtis is as unrevealing about Houdini the man as about Houdini the magician, hardly hinting at his dynamic personality, strength, ingenuity and resourcefulness. As Houdini's wife and assistant, Janet Leigh (Mrs. Tony Curtis in real life) is another cute trick. Together, they achieve an illusion that outdoes Houdini himself: in the good old Hollywood tradition, they grow old in the film's final sequences without perceptibly growing one bit less young and handsome.

