

Cost of 'Roar' measured in cast's blood, anguish

By COLIN DANGAARD
for The Gazette

'Roar' is a movie with a supporting cast of 110 lions, tigers, cheetahs, cougars, jaguars and leopards — among other animals — and it has a budget of \$5 million.

But for producer Noel Marshall and his family, the real cost is reckoned in blood, sweat and tears. Especially blood.

Since the project began:

- Marshall has been bitten 10 times by the big cats, three times seriously. Once doctors feared he might lose his arm when teeth went through one side of his hand and out the other.

- His wife Tippi Hedren has had the back of her head chewed, requiring 38 stitches and causing lengthy delays in production while her hair grew back. Then her leg was crushed by a four-ton elephant. And now she has broken her hand, slapping a lion to reprimand him.

- Son John Marshall, 23, was bitten so badly on the back of the head he reported that he could "feel the lion's teeth scraping on his skull." He received 56 stitches.

- A second son Jerry Marshall, 20, walked into a cage on the set, and a lion became possessive of his white tennis shoes, thoroughly chewing one of them with his foot inside it. He spent a month in hospital, in a bed across the hall from Tippi.

- And now daughter Melanie, also 20 and the latest victim, has had her face lacerated by a lioness. She received 12 stitches and doctors do not know yet whether she'll be permanently scarred.

Many crew members also have been injured, including the unit cook who lost his finger when he idly leant against a fence.

Cinematographer Jan de



Bont had his head gnawed by a lioness, slipping into unconsciousness before he was rescued. He remained unconscious for a week, his scalp almost entirely removed. He received 200 stitches.

"It's a nightmare," says Marshall who also produced 'The Exorcist.' "The cross-over from movie making to reality almost vanishes here."

When asked why he had sanctioned such great personal risk in the project, Marshall thought a moment and replied: "You get into anything slowly. We have been on this project now for five years. Everything we own, everything we have achieved, is tied up in it."

"Today we're 55 per cent complete. We're at a point where we just have to do it."

On location in Coledad Canyon, Calif., the movie is due for release next summer. It is an action-adventure dealing with "fears that possess the mind of man," while

Tippi Hendren struggles to pull lioness off daughter Melanie in a real-life, on-set attack during the filming of 'Roar'.

giving an insight into the nature of the big cats.

"A lion," says Marshall, "is a loving, gentle and intriguing animal. But he is also blood-curdling, terrifying and unreal."

"Nobody in Hollywood has done anything like this. It has always been said that if you work with more than one cat, you're asking for trouble. We have 110."

"I'll be happy when it's all over."

So will Melanie, John, Jerry and **Tippi**.

"This is my first movie with lions," says Melanie "and it will be my last."

Melanie — who starred opposite Gene Hackman in 'Night Movies' and Paul Newman in 'The Drowning

Pool' — says of her attack: "I was the last one in our family to get it, but I was kind of waiting. In a way, I'm glad it happened because now it's over and I'm still alive."

"We were doing a scene where there were 30 cats in the room — so many there was space for just the actors, no trainers. The cameras were running through the walls."

"One cat, a lioness, jumped me when I took my eye off her for a split second. She knocked me down and began pawing me. Then other lions piled in on top of me. It was terrifying."

"It took so long to rescue me, because my brothers first had to open the door and let the other lions out. As I lay there, I remember the

blood dripping into my eyes . . . and mother trying to pull the big cat off me."

"The first thing I thought was that my own face had been lost forever. Fortunately we have a good plastic surgeon — he has worked with most of us — so I'm confident the scars will go away."

Now Melanie is back working with the big cats.

Her mother Tippi — best known for her roles in 'The Birds' and 'Marnie' says: "We know the cats pretty well, but they are so volcanic. No matter how well you know them, you can never, never trust them."

"When people ask me if there is going to be a sequel, I say, 'Are you kidding. If we live through this, we'll be lucky.'"

