

SKYROCKET BURSTS WITH MAN ON BOARD

Law Near Death When He Attempts to Shoot Himself Far Through the Air.

HIS ROCKET 44 FEET LONG

It Flies Into a Thousand Pieces When Set Off, but Parachute Jumper Escapes Harm.

Rodman Law, who has jumped with a parachute from Brooklyn Bridge and from some of the skyscrapers in this city, attempted yesterday to take a ride on a giant steel skyrocket. Because of the angle at which the contrivance was tilted the rumor spread that Law intended to make a leap from Jersey City to Elizabeth, N. J., a distance of twelve miles.

A crowd of 150 people gathered to see Law off in the morning at the foot of Williams Avenue, Jersey City. Here, on a mound of earth, surrounded by marsh and rushes, stood his skyrocket, its steel nose pointed at an angle of forty-five degrees in the direction of Elizabeth. The rocket on which Law intended to break all records for human travel was 44 feet long from tip to tip. The powder which was to furnish power for the flight was incased in a thin steel cylinder 24 feet long and 2 feet thick, ending in a conical steel cap. The stick of the rocket was of wood and 20 feet long.

The powder was prepared by Law himself in a way to obtain slow but continuous combustion, so that the exploding grains would propel him forward at an even speed for twelve miles. On top of the steel case, at about the centre, Law built a seat for himself with a lever in front, which was meant to control the rocket's flight and keep it from whirling him off his seat.

A motion picture operator became active when Law himself appeared, clad in khaki. He took an interesting series of films while Law ran his eye along the steel barrel of the rocket to make sure it was aimed straight for Elizabeth. More reels were taken showing Law testing out the parachute which was fastened to a belt at his waist. With this the rocket man intended to descend gently to earth. When all the preliminary scenes had been duly recorded Law mounted a scaffold which had been built beside the rocket to enable him to reach the seat, which was about 18 feet above the ground.

"You may light the fuse when ready, Sam," announced Law after he had taken the seat.

The attendant came forward with a match, and the crowd retired to a safe distance when the fuse began to sputter. The motion picture man rapidly placed a high-power lens on his machine to follow the shaft to Elizabeth, and several other persons took binoculars out of their cases to see the first public ride of a human being on a skyrocket.

The spark climbed up several feet of fuse, sputtering menacingly. The spectators held their breath as it finally burned its way to the body of the machine. After a few seconds there was a terrific explosion. With a shock that threw most of the crowd to the ground the big projectile burst into a thousand pieces.

When the smoke rose the crowd saw nothing of the rocket except its splintered stick. The scaffold was powder-burned. They expected to see Law torn to fragments. But by the time all had regain their feet a figure appeared struggling in a clump of rushes about thirty feet from the scaffold.

It was Law, his clothes torn and covered with mud and blackened with powder. A physician among the spectators examined him and found that, barring a scorching of the hands and face, he was unhurt. Law attributed his escape to the fact that he had a solid seat underneath him.

Law explained that there must have been something wrong with the mixing of the powder, which caused more rapid combustion than he had intended. He said that he had made several successful short flights on rockets in private, and that he intended to repeat the experiment. Many of the spectators thought that if such a rocket could be made to shoot there would be great danger that the steel case in falling would crash into a building, and there likely will be opposition to further trials of the same kind.