

Ripley's  
**Believe It  
or Not!**<sup>®</sup>  
**SOUVENIR  
GUIDEBOOK**



*A Passport to the Strange,  
the Bizarre & the Unbelievable*

Ripley's  
**Believe It  
or Not!**

ISBN 1-893951-07-3



9 781893 951073



Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
Ripley Museo De Aunque Usted No  
Lo Crea!  
Londres No. 4, Col. Juarez  
México 06600 D.F.  
(525) 546-7670

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
901 North Ocean Boulevard  
Myrtle Beach, SC 29577  
(843) 448-2331

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Odditorium  
234 W. 42nd Street  
New York, NY 10036  
(212) 398-3133

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
Mariner Square  
250 S.W. Bay Boulevard  
Newport, OR 97365  
(541) 265-2206

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
4960 Clifton Hill  
Niagara Falls, Ontario  
Canada L2G 3N4  
(905)-356-2238

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
Pier Building, 401 Atlantic Avenue  
Ocean City, MD 21842  
(410) 289-5600

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
8201 International Drive  
Orlando, FL 32819  
(407) 351-5803

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
9907 Front Beach Road  
Panama City Beach, FL 32407  
(850) 230-6113

Ripley's Believe It or Not!  
Odditorium  
Soul Shopping Centre  
Cavill Mall  
Surfers Paradise  
Queensland, 4217 Australia  
61-7-5592-0040

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
Royal Garden Plaza  
218 Moo 10 Beach Road  
Nongprue, Banglamung  
Chonburi 20260 Pattaya, Thailand  
(66) 38-710-294

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
19 San Marco Avenue  
St. Augustine, FL 32084  
(904) 824-1606

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
307 Alamo Plaza  
San Antonio, TX 78205  
(210) 224-9299

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
175 Jefferson Street  
San Francisco, CA 94133  
(415) 771-6188

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
Boulevard Manuel Ávila Camacho S/N  
PLAZA ACUARIO, local 57  
Col. Flores Magon  
C.P. 91900, Veracruz.  
Vera Cruz, Mexico  
52-229-932-74-47

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
1735 Richmond Road  
Williamsburg, VA 23185  
(757) 220-9220

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
115 Broadway, P.O. Box 411  
Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965  
(608) 253-7556



Robert Ripley's life was an unbelievable adventure. For thirty-five years he explored the uncanny and witnessed the amazing. He was a world traveler who visited over 200 countries, seeing places few people had even heard of, from the tombs of the Ming Emperors in China, to a town called Hell in Norway!

Ripley was an artist, a reporter, an explorer, and a collector. The stories he gathered, illustrated by Ripley himself, would later appear in his popular newspaper cartoon feature Believe It or Not! Today the Believe It or Not! cartoons are still enjoyed by millions of readers around the world.

Wherever Ripley went, he searched for the odd and the unusual. In his quest, he documented the customs and beliefs of many ancient and exotic civilizations. Whenever possible he brought home artifacts from his journeys, which today form the heart of the greatest collection of oddities ever assembled. Today these artifacts can be seen in Ripley's Believe It or Not! museums around the world. Every year millions of people visit these museums to take part in an adventure, one in which they experience first hand the incredible world of Robert Ripley!



A NEW AMAZING  
**BELIEVE IT OR NOT**

Starring

**ROBERT L.  
RIPLEY**



*Ripley's*  
**Believe It  
or Not!**  
Museums

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
1441 Boardwalk  
Atlantic City, NJ 08401  
(609) 347-2001

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
135 Outer Ring Road, Varathur Hobli  
Marathalli Junction  
Bangalore, India, 560037  
+ 91-80-25239-196 x:25

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
Ocean Boulevard, Units 5 & 6  
South Promenade  
Blackpool, Lancashire  
FY4 1EZ England  
(44) 1253-341033

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
3326 W. Highway 76  
Branson, MO 65616  
(417) 337-5300

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
Cranberry Village, R.R. #6  
Cavendish, Prince Edward Island  
Canada, C0A 1N0  
(902) 963-2242

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
Radhuspladsen 57  
DK-1550 Copenhagen V  
Denmark  
(45) 33-918991

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
800 Parkway  
Gatlinburg, TN 37738  
(865) 436-5096

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
601 Palace Parkway  
Grand Prairie, TX 75050  
(972) 263-2391

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
Ripley Museo De Aunque Usted No  
Lo Crea!  
Morelos # 215  
Centro Hist6rico  
Guadalajara, C.P. 44100 Jalisco  
M6xico  
(523) 614-8487

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
6780 Hollywood Boulevard  
Hollywood, CA 90028  
(323) 466-6335

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
140 N. Cache Street, P.O. Box 954  
Jackson Hole, WY 83001  
(307) 734-0000

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
108 Duval Street  
Key West, FL 33040  
(305) 293-9939

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
The London Pavillion  
1 Piccadilly Circus  
London, England  
(020) 3238-0022

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
Al Sha'ab Leisure Park  
Baghdad Street  
Maidan Hawally, Kuwait  
(00) 965 561-3777

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
First World Plaza,  
Genting Highlands  
Kuala Lumpur 6900  
Pahang Darul  
Makmur, Malaysia  
603-5512366

## 7 *The Ripley Legacy*



*This church, near the cemetery where Ripley is buried, was once featured in the Believe It or Not! cartoon because it was made entirely from one giant redwood tree.*

Robert Ripley died in New York City in 1949. After a well attended memorial his body was transported back to his hometown of Santa Rosa, California where he was buried in the "Odd Fellows" cemetery near a church that his father helped build and his mother regularly attended.

Ripley's unusual legacy and spirit of adventure lives on today both in the Believe It or Not! cartoon that is still featured in hundreds of newspapers in multiple languages in over forty countries, and the many Ripley museums around the world that house his bizarre collection of oddities.

Every day the staff at Ripley's world headquarters still receive dozens of phone calls, hundreds of posted letters and thousands of emails from people with incredible stories of outlandish feats, amazing works of art, or unexplainable phenomena.

The phrases "Believe It or Not!" or "There's one for Ripley's" are part of our

common language, regularly heard around the world, from Orlando, Florida to Hong Kong and everywhere in between.

Ripley was often asked how and where he found his seemingly unending supply of unbelievable facts. His patented answer was: "Everywhere and all the time!"

If you know of an unbelievable fact or unusual thing, and want to become part of the world of Ripley's Believe It or Not! you can write to us at:

**RIPLEY ENTERTAINMENT INC.  
ARCHIVE DEPARTMENT  
7576 KINGSPONTE PARKWAY, SUITE 188  
ORLANDO, FLORIDA, 32819**

For more information concerning each individual museum location, hours of operation and admission costs, contact us at [HQ@RIPLEYS.COM](mailto:HQ@RIPLEYS.COM) or online at [WWW.RIPLEYS.COM](http://WWW.RIPLEYS.COM).

## 2 *The Ripley Story*

The Ripley story begins on Christmas day 1890 when Robert Leroy Ripley was born in Santa Rosa, California. A talented self-taught artist, Ripley sold his first drawing to Life magazine when he was only 18! Ripley was also a natural athlete, and his first love was baseball. He played semi-pro ball for several years, but his dream of pitching in the Big Leagues was shattered when he broke his arm during a New York Giants spring training game.

After the accident, Ripley was forced to take his art more serious; his hobby would become his occupation and his life work. He worked first for newspapers in San Francisco but left for New York City in 1913.

On a slow day in December of 1918, while working as a sports cartoonist for the New York Globe, Ripley created his first collection of odd facts and feats. The sketches, based on unusual athletic achievements, were initially entitled "Champs & Chumps", but after much deliberation, Ripley changed the title to Believe It or Not! The cartoon was an enormous instant success. The rest is history.

*Ripley with the first Believe It or Not! cartoon.*



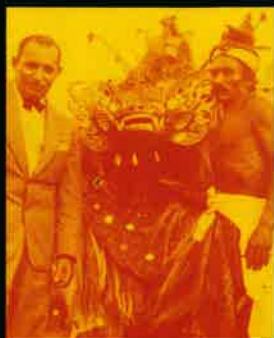
*Ripley's first love was baseball.*



Starting in 1914 with a trip to Belgium and France, travel became Ripley's lifelong obsession. During his career he visited 201 countries, circumnavigated the globe twice, and traveled a total distance equal to 18 complete trips around the world.

In 1923 he traveled to the Orient, crossing through Japan, China, Malaysia, the Philippines and India. He wrote about what he saw and experienced, and his "diary" was published back home in syndicated daily installments.

Ripley felt particularly drawn to China. He found Chinese culture to be fascinating, and he adopted many Chinese customs. For the rest of his life he liked to entertain dressed in Chinese robes and he typically served his guests elaborate Chinese feasts. At one point early in his career he signed his name "Rip Li" and later in his life he acquired an authentic Chinese junk, which became his home-away from home.



*R - A 21st century robot made entirely from used car parts!*



The Ripley film collection, including segments aired on our internationally acclaimed television series, is an integral part of every Ripley museum. Presentations typically range from one to six minutes in length and are displayed in a wide variety of settings, from small walk-by TV monitors, to sit-down theaters, to even the occasional film on a wall, ceiling or entire mirrored prism shaped room! Every film has been hand selected and custom edited to bring attention to a story that truly has to be seen to be believed.

The content of the films offers the entire gamut of the Ripley world: Ripley himself in exotic locales, unusual cultures, odd individuals and individuals performing strange, unbelievable and often death-defying stunts. Only at Ripley's are you likely to come face to face with an eight foot tall giant, people who eat crocodiles, people eaten by Great White sharks, actual wolf men, three-legged dogs, spaghetti-eating cats, people who can paint pictures on single strands of human hair, or a man strong enough to pull two fire trucks using a rope tied around his waist.



How many? Three?  
Wrong. There are six - no joke!  
Go ahead read it again.

#### THE REASONING

The brain cannot process  
the "F"s in "OF"  
Incredible or what?  
Anyone who counts all six "F"s on  
the first go is a genius -  
three is normal, four quite rare.



*Above - Believe It or Not! even the smallest child can move a five ton boulder.*  
*Below - The world's largest tire and a working water faucet floating in the air.*  
*R - Rev. Kevin Fast, as seen on film, moves two 32,000 lb. fire trucks.*



*L - Robert Leroy Ripley's lifelong obsession with travel began in 1914. Above - He is shown second from the right.*

*Below - 4639 Chinese New Year feast, New York 1942.*



Ripley was nicknamed "the Modern Marco Polo" by the Duke of Windsor. His travels took him to the four corners of the world. On one trip alone, he crossed two continents and covered 24,000 miles—15,000 miles by air, 8,000 miles by ship and over 1,000 miles by camel, donkey & horse!

Ripley's early cartoons, a collection of oddities found on his journeys, were first published in book form by Simon & Schuster in 1929. *Believe It or Not!* by Ripley, sold over a half a million copies and was on the bestseller list for months; it would stay in print for nearly forty years. Today, if all the Believe It or Not! books ever published—well over a hundred titles—were stacked one upon another, the total number of books sold would be over 150 times as tall as New York City's Empire State Building!

In 1929, after signing on as a syndicated cartoonist with King Features, part of the William Randolph Hearst newspaper empire, Ripley's salary rocketed from \$10,000 to \$100,000 a year. A legend was born and Ripley would soon become the first cartoonist to make a million dollars a year.

## The total number of Ripley's over 150 times as tall as New

At the height of his popularity, the Believe It or Not! feature was carried in over 360 newspapers around the world, was translated into 17 different languages and had a daily readership of 80 million people!

The response from his readers, many demanding proof of his unbelievable statements, was equally incredible. One cartoon alone, published in 1927, in which Ripley stated that Charles Lindbergh was not the first man to cross the Atlantic by plane, drew



Ripley's Lindbergh cartoon drew over 170,000 letters from angry readers each calling Ripley a liar.

Robert Ripley once said he would never run out of Believe It or Not! and he was right. Despite his death, our researchers and travelers continue to add modern wonders to his collection of oddities every day. Today there are many exhibits in our collection even Ripley himself would have had trouble believing. We have exhibits from the microscopic world and the worlds of science and computer technologies. We have artifacts flown in space, including flags flown on the moon and extremely rare meteorites from the planet Mars! We also have hands-on puzzles, games and illusions that defy reason and logic; illusions that can alter a person's appearance, or make their skin crawl; equilibrium destroying tunnel rides—and the strangest assortment of video presentations ever assembled.



Count the number of "F's" in the following text:

**FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF YEARS**

*Above - Siamese twins, or just an illusion? Below - Every Ripley museum has a unique collection of unusual videos of strange people & bizarre stunts. Facing Page - Enter the rotating tunnel, if you dare!*





# MODERN WONDERS

## Be Sure to Read This

Researches  
at Cambridge  
University  
found that the  
order letters  
are written in  
doesn't matter  
as long as the  
first and last  
letters are in the  
right place. You'll  
be able to read  
the words cor-  
rectly no matter  
how jumbled the  
letters are. It  
seems that your  
brain doesn't  
read each letter  
but sees the  
whole word at  
once!



*books sold would stack up to be  
York's Empire State Building!*

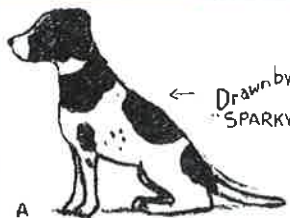


170,000 letters! This cartoon made Ripley so famous that postmen forwarded his mail even without a full address. Envelopes simply addressed, "To Rip" or "To the World's Biggest Liar" were all delivered. One man even sent a letter written in a microscopic code that could only be deciphered with a magnifying glass. The bizarre forms of addresses and the sheer volume of mail was enough for the U. S. Postmaster General to issue a decree in 1930: "...mail to Ripley would not be delivered if the address was incomplete or indecipherable." The law had little effect, however; "Rip-o-mania" was sweeping the world.



**WAYNE HARBOUR** of Bedford, Iowa, AS A HOBBY HAS WRITTEN A LETTER TO CONFIRM THE AUTHENTICITY OF EVERY ITEM IN **BELIEVE IT OR NOT** DURING THE PAST 19 YEARS! HE HAS WRITTEN 17,172 LETTERS, SPENT NEARLY \$1,500 IN POSTAGE, DEVOTED 7,167 HOURS TO HIS HOBBY— AND FILLED 75 SCRAPBOOKS WITH REPLIES FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE WORLD

Ripley dubbed Wayne Harbour "The man who wouldn't believe".



A HUNTING DOG THAT EATS PINS, TACKS, SCREWS AND RAZOR BLADES IS OWNED BY C.F. SCHULZ, St. Paul, Minn.

Charles Schulz's very first published drawing was part of a Ripley's Believe It or Not! cartoon panel.

preserved and can be seen in Ripley museums around the world.

Another famous Ripley fan, who would later settle in Ripley's hometown of Santa Rosa, California, was the late Charles Schulz, creator of Charlie Brown and the "Peanuts" cartoons. Charles Schulz's first ever-published drawing, a sketch of a certain dog that would later become famous as "Snoopy", appeared in the Believe It or Not! cartoon panel of February 22, 1937.

A Ripley contest to find unbelievable stories that ran in over one hundred newspapers for two weeks in 1932 drew 1,750,000 entries. A decade later, a contest dedicated to the war effort brought an all-time record number 19, 712, 213 responses! A survey conducted in 1936 revealed that Ripley's cartoons were the most popular feature in any paper and had a greater readership than even front-page news. Ripley himself was voted the most popular man in America, above movie stars, sports figures and even President Roosevelt.

Ripley's fans included the rich, the poor, the famous and people of all ages. His most famous fan, however, was a man who made it his life's mission to try and prove Ripley a liar! Wayne Harbour, a postal worker of Bedford, Iowa, was an intrepid letter writer. For twenty-six years he wrote letters to people featured in the Believe It or Not! cartoon attempting to find factual errors in the cartoon. Believe it or not he wrote over 17,000 letters, but never received a single reply that contradicted one of Ripley's statements! Upon his death, Wayne's widow donated his vast collection of correspondence—over 80 cartons—to the Ripley company. Today Wayne's life work has been

Last but not least in the Ripley's world of the macabre are full-size graveyards, cemeteries filled with artifacts associated with death, but also with headstones with authentic unusual and amusing epitaphs. Robert Ripley was very fond of graveyard humor (perhaps because his first job as a teenager was polishing tombstones), and he collected literally hundreds of samples of odd and comical epitaphs like:

Here lies Lester Moore

Four slugs from  
a forty-four  
No Les, No Moore

School is out!  
Teacher has  
gone home.

Here lies an Atheist  
All dressed up and  
no place to go

Here lies Jonathan Blake

Stepped on the gas  
Instead of the brake.

Here lies  
Lotta Dust

To follow you.  
I am not content.  
How do I know  
which way  
you went?



And the all-time favorite:

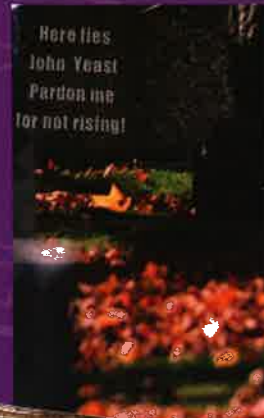
**I TOLD YOU I WAS SICK!**

In addition to unusual coffins, mourning mementoes, the occasional mummy, and the eerie tombstones, be forewarned that each Ripley graveyard also hosts a sprightly ghost who might just make you die laughing!





L - West African voodoo statue,  
Below L - A rare  
19<sup>th</sup> century vampire  
killing kit, Below  
R - An Egyptian  
mummified falcon



Since Ripley's day his initial torture collection has expanded to include the stock and trade of modern witchcraft as first practiced by Dr. Gerald Gardner of England, voodoo paraphernalia from Africa, the Caribbean and New Orleans, 20<sup>th</sup> century prison and crime artifacts, and a wide assortment of genuine "vampire killing kits". Including everything one might need to kill a suspected vampire—or at least scare him off if he keeps his distance—these kits were made in America and sold to "tourists" planning to visit Romania and Transylvania, destinations suspected in the 19<sup>th</sup> century of housing scores of vampires! A typical vampire kit contains, garlic, a mirror, a pistol, an ivory cross (often the pistol is hidden inside the cross), silver or lead bullets, a Bible, a mallet and the proverbial wooden stake to be driven through the heart of the demonic creature!

Vitas

# \$1000.00

## FOR THE BEST BELIEVE IT OR NOT ABOUT THE WAR



**BIBLE  
SAVED HIS LIFE**  
PFC ARTHUR ANDERSON  
Of Paul, Meas.  
WAS CARRYING A SMALL  
BIBLE IN HIS BREAST POCKET  
WHEN HIT BY SHRAPNEL  
JUST ACCIDENTLY THE WORD  
ON WHICH THE MOST  
POWERFUL BIT OF SHRAPNEL  
SPENT ITS STRENGTH WAS  
"CLEMENCY"

*Ripley*

**D**o you know some astonishing occurrence, or extraordinary fact, or outstanding example of courage, devotion or achievement, related to the war? Send it to ROBERT L. RIPLEY. He will pay \$1000.00 cash for the best Believe It or Not about the war sent to him before midnight, February 3, 1945. You have nothing to buy. You do not have to be a writer, for literary merit is not a



determining factor. The only stipulation is that your Believe It or Not must be true and provable. Read the rules below, and send in your Believe It or Not today. You can win \$1000.00. Whether or not it's a prize-winner, if RIPLEY uses it in his famous newspaper feature, you will receive an autographed copy of his big Believe It or Not book.

**THE ONLY RULES ARE:**

Address your Believe It or Not about the war to:

### ROBERT L. RIPLEY, 235 E. 45th ST., NEW YORK 17, N.Y.

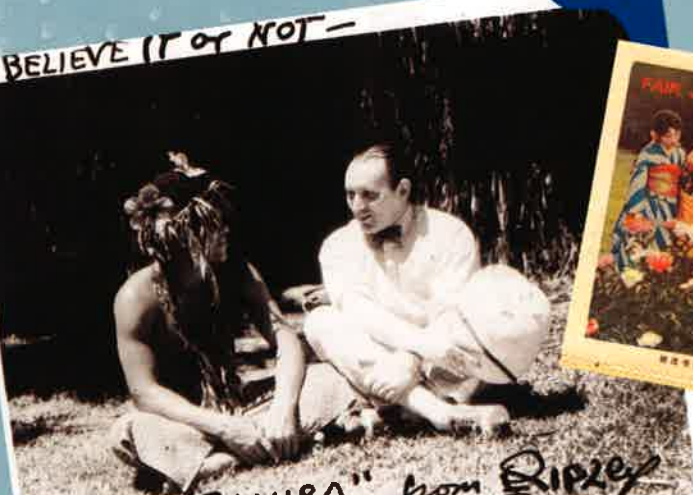
NOTE: Ripley obtains clearance from the proper authorities on anything of military or naval nature in his cartoons before publication.

CONSULAR

Visas

BELIEVE IT OR NOT -



"BULUM BALUBA" from Ripley  
SUVA, FIJI ISLANDS

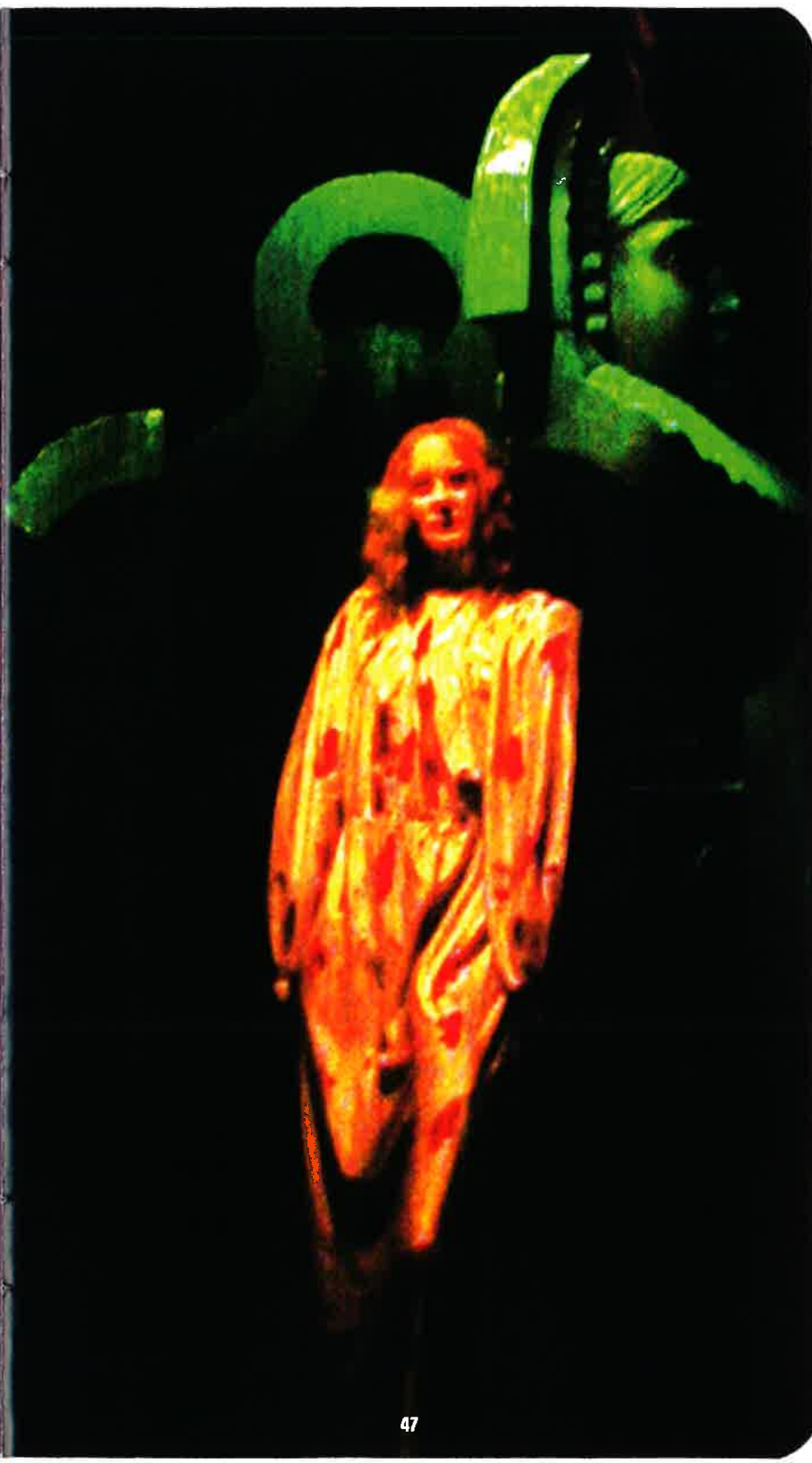
*Ripley dined with a cannibal chief in Fiji!*



To  
TED STONE  
- ALL THE BEST!  
from  
Ripley  
and  
HIS SEEING-EYE DOG  
"CYCLOPS"  
BELIEVE IT OR NOT

HAPPY  
MEMORIES  
TA-BOO

*Ripley inspected  
Buddha's giant foot-  
prints at the Temple  
of Maha Bodhi in  
India, 1937.*



## WITCHES, VAMPIRES, GHOSTS & GRAVEYARDS



*4,000 yr. old mummified  
hand of an Egyptian priestess*

Ripley museums also have galleries devoted to the "darker" side of human nature—where torture devices, graveyards and even vampires and ghosts, are on display.

Ripley visited Europe several times during the 1920-30s in search of medieval torture weapons, and on one trip to Germany in 1928 he carried home dozens of torture devices once associated with the Spanish Inquisition and the infamous Castle of Nuremberg. The most gruesome of his finds was an authentic "Iron Maiden". This torture device, a metal and wood female shaped cabinet embedded with 13 iron spikes, was designed to pierce the eyes, throat and heart of religious heretics. Prisoners found guilty of heresy died a most hideous death in the "Maiden's" embrace. Their bodies would be so mangled and bloody, that rather than touch the corpse, the bottom of the "Maiden" would be opened up and the remains dumped unceremoniously into the castle's moat, or a nearby river.

Other European torture devices on display—many invented to punish suspected witches—include chastity belts, placed on young girls and wives by their fathers or husbands to assure they remained faithful

and pure; spiked chairs, the ultimate in uncomfortable furniture; manacles of every size and shape, from handcuffs to full body shackles; pillories, stocks and gibbets, designed to imprison criminals without maiming them; and a dastardly assortment of thumb screws, brands, branks (iron masks often shaped like animals or horned devils) and gagging devices known as "The Fear of Agony".



*A genuine two-headed skeleton*



*L - New Year's dancers in Bali. R - A Japanese rooster with a 24' tail.*



*At the Mayan ruins of  
Chichen Itza, Mexico, 1938.*



*Live from the bottom of the Carlsbad Caverns, June 2, 1939.*

## *The Age of Radio*

During the 1930s and 40s Ripley's stories of the odd and unusual entered millions of living rooms across America via radio. Ripley pioneered "on-location" broadcasts and performed many "firsts" in the history of radio. He was the first person to broadcast from ship to shore, the first to broadcast from Australia to America, and the first to broadcast around the world simultaneously using a corps of translators. He interviewed a handler of poisonous snakes from a snake pit in Florida and a daredevil skydiver in Georgia while falling 12,000 feet before opening his parachute. He went behind Niagara Falls and to the bottom of a shark tank. He went underground in the Carlsbad Caverns, down the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, and he even dragged his staff and equipment to the North Pole! He interviewed accident survivors, baseball legends, politicians, and on one Christmas Eve he even interviewed a man named Santa Claus and a woman named Merry Christmas!

*R - Ripley broadcast a radio show from the bottom of Marineland, Florida's shark tank on Feb. 23, 1940.*



THERE ARE 20 TRIANGLES  
IN THIS STAR



- Miniature paintings of Hollywood, sports and political celebrities painted on Spanish black beans
- Portraits created from hundreds of jellybeans
- Miniature landscape paintings and writings on rice grains
- Cars covered with thousands of dollars worth of coins!
- Portraits painted on animals, including snakes, butterflies and even vampire bats
- A dinosaur made completely from discarded car parts.
- Purses and rugs made from cigarette wrappers.
- Clothing, including vests, pants, hats, mittens and skirts, made from dog and human hair
- Da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" and Botticelli's "The Birth of Venus" recreated using slices of burnt toast
- Football players made from gum wrappers.



If, however, wood is not your thing, Ripley's offers a wide variety of one-of-a-kind zany art made from slightly more exotic mediums:



- A 20' x 26' recreation of Van Gogh's self portrait produced entirely from over 3,000 postcards of famous Van Gogh paintings!



- Copies of Michelangelo's "The Pieta" and Da Vinci's "The Last Supper" made from ordinary brown paper grocery shopping bags



- Medieval armor for cats!



- Human figures and domestic animals made from broken toys scavenged from city dumps



- Two and three-dimensional works, including John Wayne, made from recycled lint collected from laundry clothes dryers



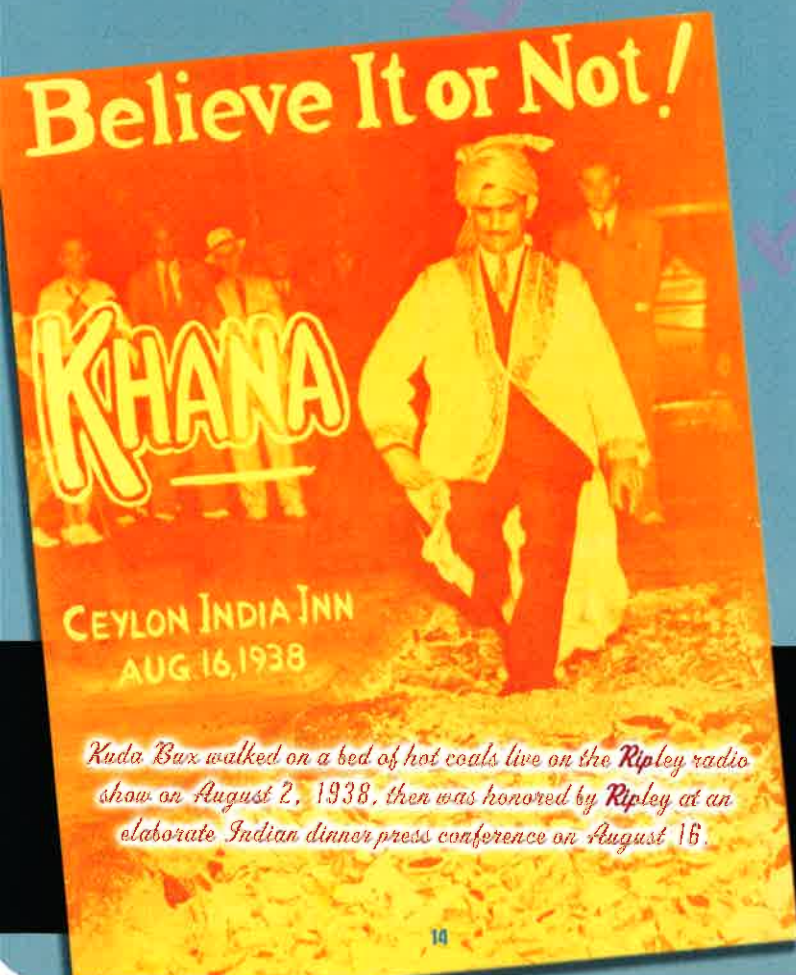
- A life size horse, a dinosaur and a rhinoceros made from car bumpers



In 1938 on perhaps his most memorable show, Ripley described for his listeners the dramatic, live performance of one Kuda Bux, an Indian firewalker. A twenty-foot ditch was dug in a parking lot outside Radio City in New York and filled with fiery coals. Twenty-four hours later with the temperature inside the pit at 1,400 degrees Fahrenheit, Kuda Bux walked across the pit not once, but twice! When examined by Ripley and a team of doctors it was found that Bux had absolutely no injuries.

During other broadcasts Ripley recalled his adventures in exotic lands and the curious people he encountered. His radio show, which started as a weekly show but at times was aired nightly, was one of the most popular radio shows of all time and was on the air continuously for fourteen consecutive years (1930-1944).

World War II changed the world of radio and ushered in the age of television. Ripley, always a risk-taking pioneer, was up to the challenges of the exciting new medium. In 1948 he created a television



*Kuda Bux walked on a bed of hot coals live on the Ripley radio show on August 2, 1938, then was honored by Ripley at an elaborate Indian dinner press conference on August 16.*



HOW MANY  
EQUILATERAL TRIANGLES?



*Above R - Louis Armstrong created from 21,000+ individually cut stone crystals.*

At Ripley's, however, the artist's medium is often more remarkable than the actual artwork. Many of Ripley's best artwork has been created from unusual things, including ordinary household objects like, popsicle sticks, cigarette wrappers, dog hair, black beans, jelly beans, laundry lint, toast, toothpicks and matchsticks!

Ripley's has some of the world's most beautiful sculptures made from matchsticks and toothpicks. There are planes, boats, space ships, a San Francisco cable car, a 16' long Titanic, a 24' tall Eiffel Tower, a 40' long Great Wall of China, and even a magnificent 13' long scale model of a 1907 Silver Ghost Rolls Royce car with moving parts!

There are also literally hundreds of examples of more traditional wood carvings in the Ripley collection, including wood whittled whimsies in bottles, continuous chains carved from a single piece of wood, and "Tramp art"—items made by itinerant hoboes during the Great Depression from cigar boxes in exchange for a meal or temporary shelter.



## WEIRD & WACKY ART



Every Ripley museum houses

a gallery of "fine art" including wall paintings, mosaics, and three-dimensional sculptures. From the classical to the incredible, Ripley's has it all.

The prizes of the collection are full-size vehicles, including a Jaguar car and Cinderella's pumpkin carriage, carved completely from wood, and an exquisite two-sided sculpture called "The Devil and the Damsel". Carved in Germany in the 19th century out of fruitwood, one side of the statue shows the figure of Margaret from Goethe's Faust, a damsel who represents goodness and purity. On the other side is a frightening image of Mestopheles, the Devil. So why is this statue unique? Believe it or not, it is impossible to see both images at the same time. Someone looking at the damsel has no idea the devil is lurking so close, and vice versa, a person staring at the devil is totally unaware of the presence of the serene beautiful maid on the opposite side!



*Above - The Mona Lisa recreated from 63 slices of toast, Below L - A 1907 Rolls Royce car created from over 1,000,000 matchsticks, Below - On one side of this statue is the devil, R - On the other is a maiden.*



*Ripley helped reptile expert Ross Allen milk a dangerous rattlesnake live on air from Silver Springs, Florida, May 17, 1936.*

pilot based on one of his most popular radio shows, the story of Grimaldi the melancholy clown. The pilot was a great success and led in 1949 to Ripley being given one of the very first regular weekly television series.

The show featured Ripley interviewing celebrities and subjects of Believe It or Not! cartoons. It also showed him drawing his cartoons and discussing his favorite unusual artifacts. Some segments were filmed in his palatial BION Island mansion and others were filmed in his downtown Manhattan studio apartment. The grind of a weekly TV show soon took its toll, however, and Ripley had a heart attack on air during the 13th episode. He died in a hospital three days later. Ironically his last broadcast concerned the origins of the military death song "Taps."

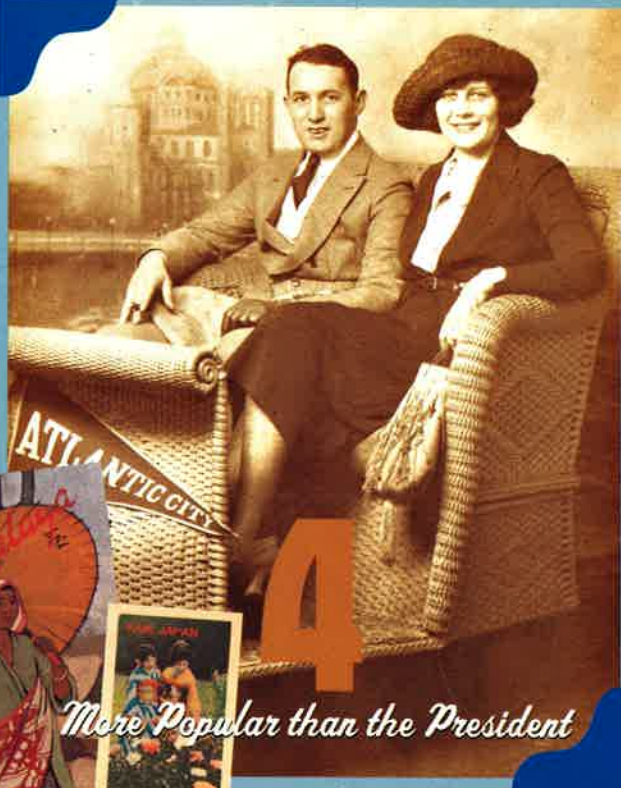
The show continued after his death with guest MCs for two full seasons and Believe It or Not! has returned to television in three different formats since, including the latest incarnation beginning in January 2000 starring Dean Cain and Kelly Packard.

Look at the chart and say the **COLOR**, not the **WORD**.

**YELLOW BLUE ORANGE**  
**BLACK RED GREEN**  
**PURPLE YELLOW RED**  
**ORANGE GREEN BLACK**  
**BLUE RED PURPLE**  
**GREEN BLUE ORANGE**

Left - Right Conflict

Your right brain tries to say the color but your left brain insists on reading the word.



*More Popular than the President*

Ripley was married briefly early in his career, but by the 1930s he was living up to his reputation as America's most eligible bachelor, a man about town who thrived on activity and relished all things strange. His personality in many ways was as unusual as the stories and objects he collected.

A colleague once said "the most curious object in the [Ripley] collection is probably Mr. Ripley himself." He drew his cartoon every-



*Top - Ripley with his wife Beatrice, on their honeymoon in Atlantic City in 1919.*

*L - Ripley with one of his prize boats and several of his favorite lady friends!*



*Robert Ripley and Thailand's Flour Girls*

carved from thousands of pieces of camel and water buffalo bones. Perhaps the oddest Oriental curios, however, are artifacts from Tibet made from human bones! The Ripley collection includes leg bone flutes, complete shaman outfits made from hundreds of carved bones, and coffee pots, drums and altar bowls made from the skulls of saints! These bowls were filled with a wine and blood potion that when consumed was supposed to insure mortality—as well as bringing rain and ridding the drinker's house of snakes!



*Chinese Camel bone carving detail*





## THE ORIENT



CHING  
FOO  
BLUE-  
FACED  
CHINESE  
OF CHINA  
ONLY HIS FACE  
WAS BLUE  
HIS BEARD AND  
HOUS WERE  
WHITE

Ripley's favorite obsession was the Far East. For over twenty-five years he dedicated himself to exploring the ancient cultures, habits and beliefs of the Orient. In doing so, he gave many Westerners their first glimpse into an exotic world they had never seen or would never experience first hand.

All three of Ripley's palatial residences were lavishly decorated with Oriental art and artifacts, everything from rugs and dragon beds to delicate cricket cages (used to house prize winning Chinese fighting crickets), and massive bronze figures called "The Guardians of Heaven". Representing incarnations of the Buddhist deities Brahma and Indra, these statues known as "Halt all Evil" and "Kill all Evil" once stood guard at the entrance to Ripley's B.I.O.N. Island estate, but now guard the gateway to the Believe It or Not! museum in St. Augustine, Florida.

For centuries artists in the Orient have used natural materials to create wonderful works of art. Ripley's priceless collection contains several intricate statues carved from tree roots; elaborate giant Buddhas, ships, pagodas and even a complete two-ton rickshaw, made entirely of jade; and massive fantasy scenes



-day between 7 a.m. and 11 a.m. — often drawing it upside down! He dressed in mismatching bright colors and patterns (his best friend Bugs Baer once described his wardrobe as looking like a paint factory had exploded in his closet), wore bow ties and two-toned spat shoes. He collected cars, but never learned to drive and though he

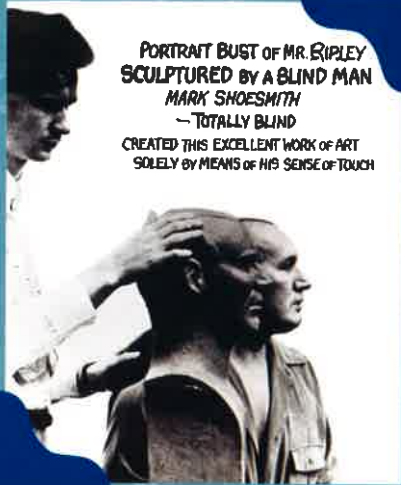


*Ripley with two monks at the Monastery of Meteora, Greece, 1937.*

regularly used complicated sound and recording equipment for his broadcasts, associates noted that he was afraid to use the telephone for fear he would be electrocuted! He was a non-swimmer, but he lived on the ocean and had an odd assortment of boats, including dugout canoes from Panama, a gondola from Venice and an authentic Chinese junk, named the Mon Lei. His

museum-like homes, one in Florida and two in New York, were filled with artifacts he brought back from his travels. At his palatial thirty-four room BION Island home in Mamaroneck, New York, there were hundreds of Chinese statues and wall hangings, Indian totem poles, a huge collection of beer steins, weapons of torture from Germany, colossal Oriental bronze guardian statues, a twenty foot pet python and even a one-eyed dog named Cyclops.

**PORTRAIT BUST OF MR. RIPLEY  
 SCULPTURED BY A BLIND MAN  
 MARK SHOESMITH  
 - TOTALLY BLIND  
 CREATED THIS EXCELLENT WORK OF ART  
 SOLELY BY MEANS OF HIS SENSE OF TOUCH**



*Above - Ripley with  
 Masai warriors, Kenya,  
 1933.*

*L- Ripley in Hawaii on  
 his last trip, 1948.*

*Top R- On the Tigris  
 river in Baghdad, Iraq,  
 1934.*

*R- In Holland, 1928.*



**Believe It or Not**



*Above L to R - Chicken  
 that lived for 17 days with-  
 out a head., An echidna,  
 only one of two egg laying  
 mammals. R - A full-size  
 12 yr old 5-legged cow.  
 Below L - Canada's  
 mythological cold-water  
 fur-bearing trout*



Ripley was also intrigued with animal oddities, poor creatures dealt strange fates by "Mother Nature". The Ripley collection today includes a horse with three legs; two-headed calves, pigs, rabbits, turtles and kittens; albino animals including a buffalo, a moose and a lion; giant snakes and alligators; a whole menagerie of multi-winged and multi-limbed birds; and even a headless chicken!

In addition to these "truth is stranger than fiction" genuine creatures, the Ripley collection also contains some not quite so well documented mythical creatures, like "Fiji mermaids, fur-covered fish, footprints of Bigfoots and chupacabras, a New Jersey Devil and even hair from the Abominable Snowman of the Himalayan Mountains!

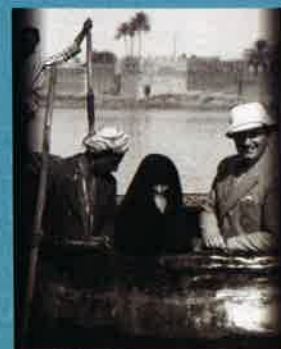
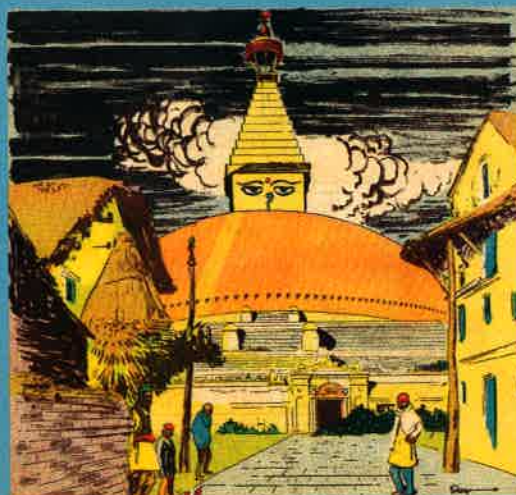
Today these legends are joined by a whole new cast of modern wonders, people like:

- **Walter Hudson**, a New York man who grew to an amazing 1400+ lbs eating a daily diet of: 2 boxes of sausages, 1 pound of bacon, 12 eggs and a loaf of bread for breakfast; 4 Big Macs, 4 cheeseburgers, and 8 large fries for lunch; 3 ham steaks or 2 chickens, 4 baked potatoes, 4 sweet potatoes, and 4 heads of broccoli for dinner; washed down by six quarts of soda at each meal!
- **Johnny Tong**, a young man who can insert his pet snake up his nostrils and retrieve it out his mouth.
- **The "Ubangi" Women of Chad, Africa** who insert wooden plates into their mouths, which extend their lips to huge proportions.
- **The Padaung women of Myanmar** who stretch their necks sometimes as much as 25" high with large heavy brass coils.



- **Rodney Fox**, an Australian spear fisherman who survived being attacked by a Great White shark. His mangled body was literally held together

by his wet suit until he was rescued and repaired with 463 stitches!



The 1930s and 40s were the Golden Age of Ripley. The phrases "Believe It or Not!" and "That's one for Rip" had become a part of everyday speech. In small towns and big cities across North America people filled movie theaters and vaudeville halls to hear his lectures and to see his films. Virtually self-educated, he was the author of three best selling books, the holder of three honorary PHD titles from esteemed colleges, and a millionaire to boot! The shy young man born of poor farmers in a small town in California had become a celebrated public figure more popular than the President!





*Ripley's Believe It or Not! Odditorium in Surfers Paradise, Australia.*

## Part Two: Odditoriums



*A genuine allosaurus skull*

**“BELIEVE IT OR NOT”**

PRESENTS

**“CROCKO”** THE GIRL WITH A CROCODILE BODY

GREATEST FREAK ALIVE — NOT AN ILLUSION



Featuring Oddities as Cartooned by **ROBT. L. RIPLEY**



**UNBELIEVABLE**

**WORLD'S TALLEST MAN**

**8' 11"**

**272 cm**

**491 lbs.**

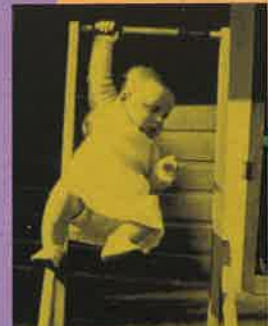
**223 kg**

**37AA**  
Shoe Size

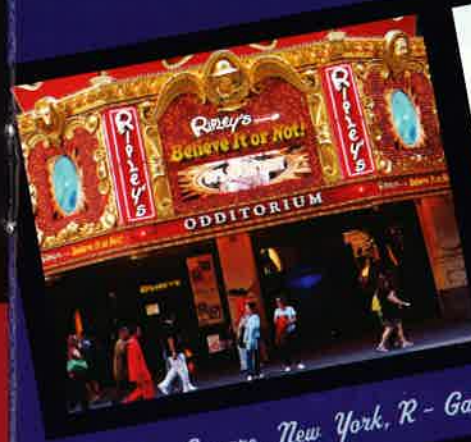
**HOW DO YOU MEASURE UP?**  
ACTUAL Hand Size: 12.5"/318mm

**Ripley's Believe It or Not!**

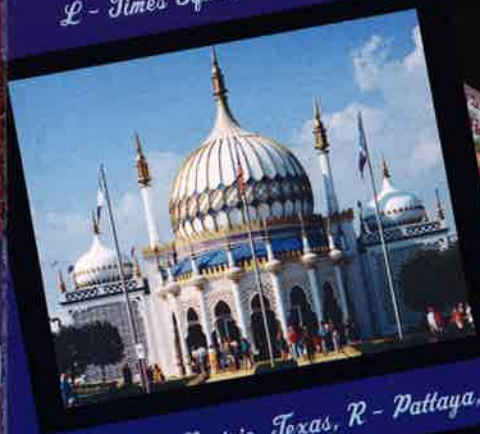
**ODDITIES**



*Above - Robert Wadlow wore a size 37AA shoe and weighed 491 lbs!*



*L - Times Square, New York, R - Gatlinburg, Tennessee*



*L - Grand Prairie, Texas, R - Pattaya, Thailand*



*From L to R - 1) Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, 2) Ocean City, Maryland, 3) Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, 4) San Francisco, California*



From L to R - 1) St. Augustine, Florida, 2) Atlantic City, New Jersey,  
3) Jackson Hole, Wyoming



From L to R - 1) Mexico City, Mexico, 2) Hollywood, California,  
3) Vera Cruz, Mexico

Amongst the "old favorites" there is...

◀ **Robert Wadlow**, The Alton Giant who at a height of 8' 11" was the tallest man of all time. In 1940, at the age of 22 he appeared on Ripley's popular radio program.

• **Wang, the Human Unicorn**, a Manchurian farmer with a deer antler-like 13" horn growing out of the back of his head. Ripley's photo of this man, taken in 1928, remains one of the most unusual and unbelievable images in the entire Ripley collection.

• **Liu Ch'ung**, the double-eyed man of China who had two sets of pupils in each of his eyes!

• **Alexandre Patty**, a French circus acrobat who could climb, or should we say—bounce—up and down stairs on his head!

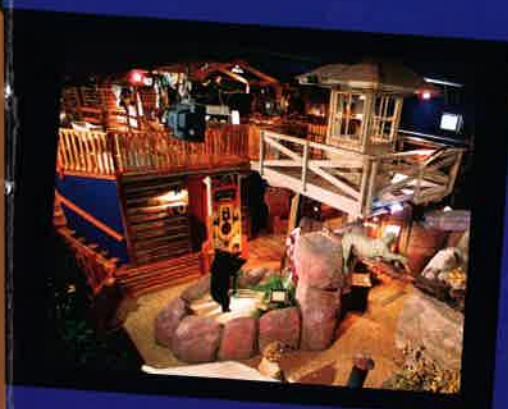
• **The Lighthouse Man**, a beggar who roamed the streets of Chungking, China with a candle set into the top of his head! The candle was inserted into a surgically drilled hole in his skull and held in place with melted wax. In exchange for a few pennies, he hired himself out as a night-time guide taking tourists through the city's dark and dangerous streets.

• **Avelino Perez**, who could pop his eyes out of their sockets!

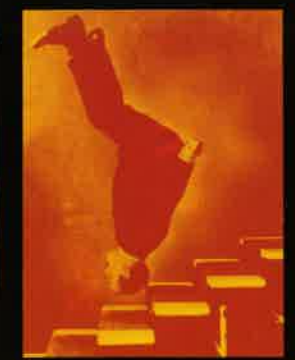
• **Johnny Eck**, who Ripley called "The Most Amazing Man Alive"—an extremely versatile man born with no legs who was an accomplished painter and could perform seemingly impossible maneuvers like climbing a ladder.







*From L to R - 1) Orlando, Florida, 2) Branson, Missouri,  
3) Niagara Falls, Canada*



From L to R -  
 1) Copenhagen, Denmark,  
 2) Panama City Beach, Florida  
 3) Blackpool, England



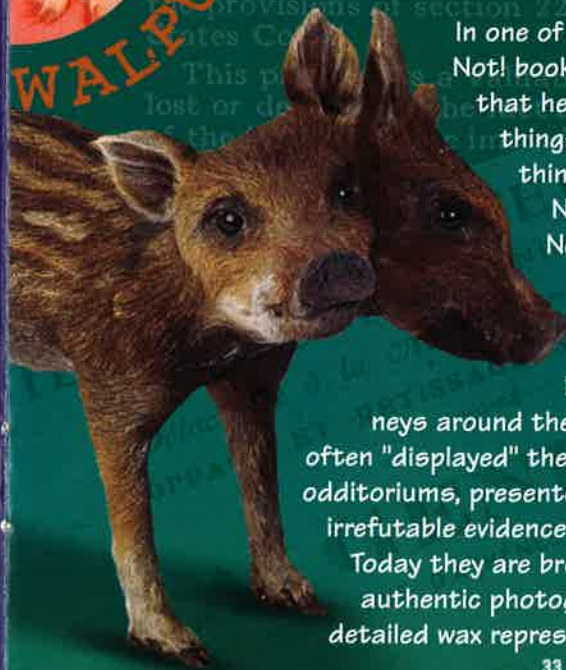
Ripley's Believe It or Not!  
 Odditorium in  
 San Antonio, Texas.



Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum  
 in London, England.



## STRANGE PEOPLE & ODD ANIMALS



In one of his first Believe It or Not! books, Robert Ripley wrote that he had seen many strange things, but "the strangest thing he ever saw was man". No Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum would be complete without an assortment of the incredible people who Ripley met on his journeys around the world. In his day Ripley often "displayed" these actual people at his odditoriums, presented live on stage as irrefutable evidence of their existence. Today they are brought back to life with authentic photographs, movies and finely detailed wax representations.

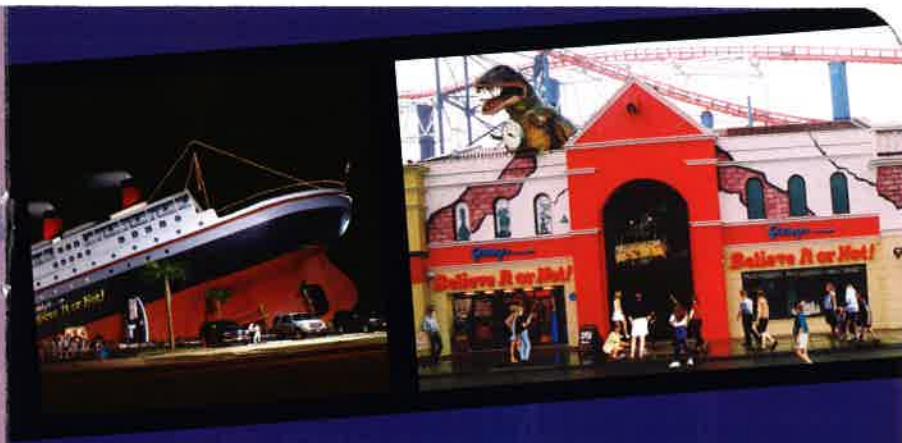
## TRIBAL ARTIFACTS

Amongst Ripley's most exotic treasures are fascinating cultural artifacts acquired in the primitive outposts of civilization, rare objects like decorated ancestor heads and cannibal skulls. Before the arrival of Europeans, statues in New Guinea of revered people were displayed with real human heads in front of clan dwellings. The skulls and statues were thought to hold the virtues of the deceased and were considered a holy link between the past and present.

From Africa, Ripley brought back rare carved statues of deities, crocodile jawbone daggers, and masks made from the flayed skin of human slaves.

From Fiji he collected genuine cannibal forks and from Borneo, ornately decorated headhunting swords. And of course, from South America, there are the infamous shrunken heads —

there are currently over seventy shrunken heads in the Ripley collection of more than twenty thousand artifacts — including two female shrunken torsos, one of which was once owned by writer Ernest Hemingway!



L - Key West, Florida, R - Williamsburg, Virginia

Focus on the dot in the center and move your head back and forth... Believe It or Not!

Ripley's  
**Believe It  
or Not!**



Renewal, extensions, amendments,  
2. limitations, restrictions  
*Palaces of Curiosities and Wonders*

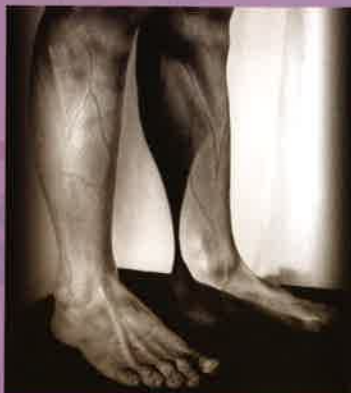
# 5



*Ripley's first odditorium opened in Chicago in 1933.*

In 1933 almost 2 million people visited Ripley's first "Odditorium" at the World's Fair in Chicago. Inside the museum were dozens of Ripley's famous cartoons and hundreds of strange artifacts from every corner of the globe, like human bone outfits from Tibet, medieval chastity belts from Europe, and the feature exhibit, an amazing life-size self-portrait of Japanese artist Hananuma Masakichi.

Masakichi created his own image for his fiancée after learning he was ill with tuberculosis. The sculpture, consisting of hundreds of tiny interlocking pieces of wood so skillfully dovetailed and joined as to avoid detection, is anatomically correct down to the smallest detail and includes the artist's own hair, fingernails and toenails.



*Detail from sculpture of Japanese artist Hananuma Masakichi.*



*A rare genuine Fiji mermaid.*

## *The Modern Ripley Collection*

Today many of Ripley's treasures can be seen in Believe It or Not! museums located around the world. Each museum is unique in its architecture, its collection of oddities and their presentation. There is a careful balance between the strange, the shocking and the beautiful. In the museums there are works of art made from everyday objects, incredible collections, and samples of strange hobbies.

There are exhibits from the world of science and illusions, hands-on interactive displays, videos and state of the art special effects, all set in exotic themed surroundings, including spooky graveyards, lush jungles and scenes of natural disaster.



*A chair owned by giant Johann Petursson makes for a perfect photo opportunity.*

In addition to artifacts, the first odditorium also featured a wide assortment of the strangest live performers ever gathered under one roof, characters like Alfred Langevin who could blow up balloons with his eyes, Joe Laurello, "The Human Owl", who could twist his head 180 degrees, and Sam Simpson who could put a baseball in his mouth and sing at the same time!

The first "odditorium" was such a success that throughout the 1930s traveling trailer shows would



*Top to Bottom - Joe Laurello, The Human Owl, Ripley with a giant 10' Japanese crab.*

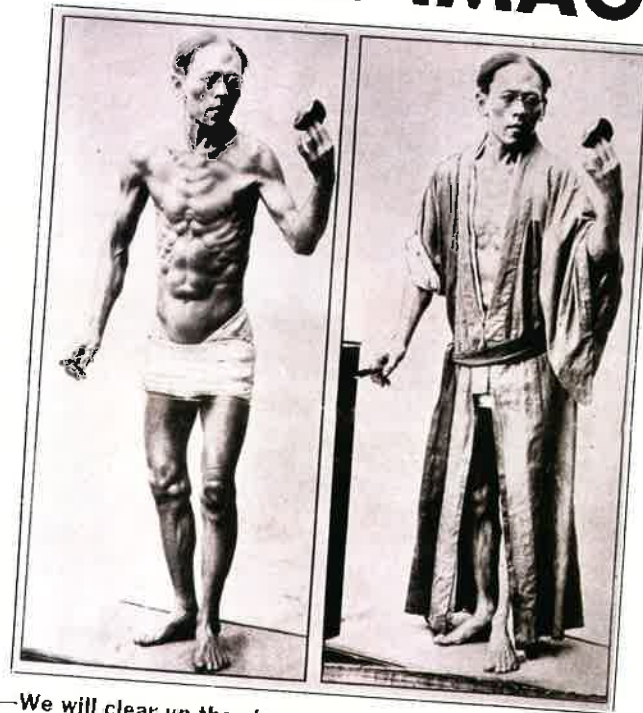
**Keep staring at the black dot. After a while the glow will appear to disappear.**

appear in Detroit, St. Louis and Washington D.C. and permanent shows would be the hits of world's fairs and expositions at San Diego, Dallas, Cleveland, San Francisco and ultimately on Broadway in New York City in 1940. The first permanent Ripley museum opened in St. Augustine, Florida ten years later in 1950.

# LAST MINUTE PHOTOS

(CHANGED DAILY)

## MAN OR IMAGE?



Chicago—We will clear up the above question by revealing that the image is on the left and that the artist Hananuma Masakigki, Japanese sculptor, is on the right. The statue is said to be the most life-like ever created—is life-sized and perfect in every detail. It is made entirely of wood (2,000 pieces) held together by pegs and glue. The statue is now on exhibition in Ripley's "Believe It or Not" Odditorium at the World's Fair.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS PHOTO.

PICTURE FROM THE  
**Herald** Chicago and **Examiner**  
 CHICAGO'S MOST INTERESTING NEWSPAPER



ZNZIBAR

DRES



*"Please take good care of this. I think it is one of my relatives!"*



Amongst the rarest curiosities in the collection of unbelievable artifacts were a pair of shrunken heads from Ecuador, South America, one of which Ripley received in the mail with a note saying: "Please take good care of this. I think it is one of my relatives!"

The practice of shrinking human heads was once common amongst the Jivaro Indians of Ecuador, South America. The shrinking of human heads was a ritual that had been handed down for centuries from one generation to another. The heads of slain enemies were valued as war trophies and symbols of bravery. When a fighter killed his enemy, the victim's head was cut off. The skin was then peeled away from the skull and hot stones and sand were poured into the cavity. The head was sewn shut and boiled in herbs until it shrunk to the size of a fist. It was then smoked over an open fire to darken and harden it while ceremonial dances, songs, and feasts were performed—often for as long as three days.

FOR NOT VALID.

FOR NOT VALID.

Date

FRID

*L - Ripley with carved totems from Africa, New Guinea and the Pacific Northwest.*