

Ripley's

Believe It or Not!

HOOP ENTHUSIAST

Ohio-born mother-of-three Lori Lynn Lomeli is never happier than when surrounded by hula hoops. Introduced to hula hooping at the age of eight, she once made headlines for spinning 82 hoops simultaneously for three complete revolutions in Reno, Nevada.

LITTLE DRUMMER

Two-year-old American Julian Pavone has already performed in front of 30,000 people playing the drums! According to his father, Bernie Julian, he started playing on a drum kit at just three months. He has even made his own CD.



STRETCH SAREE

Weavers in India created a silk saree that is 1,585 ft (xxx m) long and over 4 ft (x m) wide. Up to 120 weavers worked 24 hours a day on it for more than 80 days and the finished article weighed over xx lb (57 kg).

RADIO REV

Jay and Jason Plugge of Sunnyvale, California, have invented a car radio that plays the engine sounds of classic cars, including Ferraris and Corvettes, from the 1950s and 1960s.



SKETCH SKILL

Around 3,000 people collaborated in drawing a teapot on a huge Etch A Sketch that measured 20 x 35 ft (x x m) at Boston, Massachusetts, in 2006.

TEMPORARY PARK

In November 2005, the arts group Rebar transformed a downtown San Francisco parking spot into a temporary park. They put coins in the meter and proceeded to position turf, a bench and a tree to create a green space for two hours. In a previous venture they spent five days digging a filing cabinet into the New Mexico desert to serve as a library.

INSECT FEAST

To mark Montreal Insectarium's 15th birthday in 2005, it staged an insect-tasting celebration—a six-legged lunch prepared by chef Nicole-Anne Gagnon. The menu included atta ants in a tortilla, roasted crickets served on a cucumber canapé, barbecued locusts, jellied crickets, and bruschetta with olive tapenade and bamboo worms.

DOGGIE SURFING

The world's first canine surfing championships took place in California in 2006 at, naturally enough, the Coronado Dog Beach. Riding the waves on custom-made dog surfboards, each hound had three chances to impress a panel of professional surfing instructors. The animals were scored on confidence level, length of ride and overall surfing abilities.

NEWSPAPER MODELS

Zhu Zhonghe from Shanghai, China, at the age of 70 discovered the art of making models created entirely from newspaper. He has made the Eiffel tower, a Dutch windmill, bridges, boats, and the former residence of the late chairman Mao Zedong.

FANTASTIC FEATS

SWORD SWALLOWER

Roderick Russell makes a living by inserting blades 24 in (xx cm) long into his esophagus. The average adult esophagus ranges from 12 to 15 in (xx to xx cm) in length, so the Burlington, Vermont, sword swallower, dices with death every time he performs his routine.

Russell learned the art of sword swallowing in Italy and practised three times a day for a year before he was ready to perform before an audience. The first thing he had to master was the gag reflex. Some swallowers perfect this with an unfurled wire coat hanger or a peacock feather, but Russell used a sword from the outset. He also learned that the esophagus isn't as straight as a sword.

"The stomach is much shallower than it appears," he says, "and it curves to the left. The epiglottis and trachea were surprisingly difficult obstacles for me to push past. I learned to push the epiglottis closed with my hand before learning

to control it with the tip of a sword. Then I hold my breath for a split second as the sword glides past the closed epiglottis. Getting past the heart is always a touchy moment. I need to turn the sword a little to the left to get into my stomach."

Russell took up sword swallowing to help audiences realise they could achieve anything they wanted. He describes the art as the Holy Grail of mind over body. So far, the mind is definitely winning although he does take one precaution. "Before I swallow a sword, I always lick the blade. A dry sword is even more difficult to swallow."

