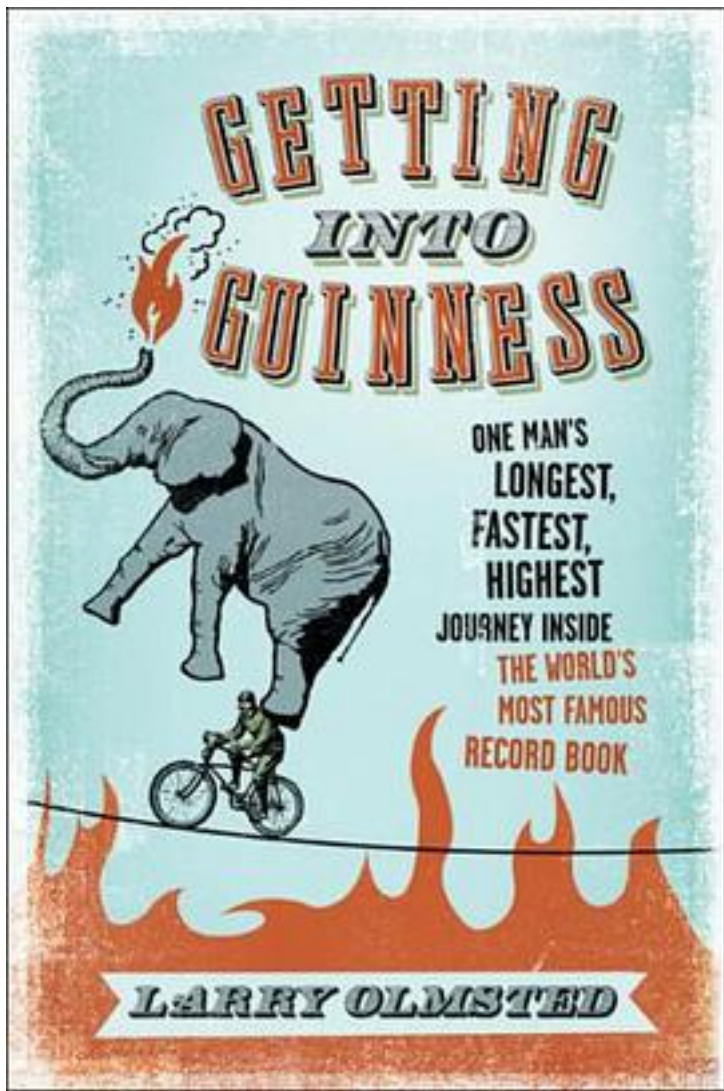


Getting into Guinness



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A fascinating mix of participatory journalism and history, *Getting Into Guinness* is the never-before-told story of the bestselling copyrighted book of all time. Veteran reporter Larry Olmsted began a personal quest to break an existing world record, then to set another one, and soon he was fully immersed in the crazy and highly competitive world of record breaking. This is his behind-the-scenes report of the characters who created the famous record book and continue to make it wackier and wackier with every passing year. The enthralling 50-year history of the Guinness World Records is a story of phenomenal success, equally compelling failures, and extreme oddities. People all over the world strive to get into the book, often in the most unbelievable ways. Olmsted chronicles some of the funniest and most interesting Guinness record holders from a uniquely insider perspective: he himself is one of them. It all began with a gentleman's wager over which was the fastest game bird in Europe, the golden plover or the grouse. The attempt to answer this question has sold more than 100 million books in dozens of languages and every corner of the globe. Today, there is heated competition for the record to hold the most records (currently held by Ashrita Furman, 114 records and counting), as well as classic curiosities that have lasted for decades (the tallest man in history is still Robert Wadlow, at 8' 11"). Interwoven into all of this is Olmsted's account of his own two successful record-setting attempts, the first involving traveling halfway around the world with his golf shoes—"Greatest Distance Between Two Rounds of Golf on the Same Day"—and the second causing him to nearly lose his mind while playing the world's longest poker session. Why do people devote so much energy to get into the record book, often at great risk? Why do the most extreme fans devote their entire lives to this pursuit? Why is society so obsessed with records and record breaking? Why do Americans alone buy a million and a half copies of the famous book every year, propelling it to the top of the bestseller lists decade after decade? Why do readers of all generations remember the same record-holding icons, the fattest twins, the longest fingernails, and the tallest man? After his own journey inside the world of record breaking, these are the questions Olmsted attempts to answer. In the tradition of the bestselling *Word Freak*—a mélange of travelogue, memoir, investigative journalism, and history—*Getting Into Guinness* is a must-read for anyone who has ever read Guinness World Records and wondered why someone would grow their fingernails for an entire lifetime.

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