The features marked with a star (*) are based entirely on material taken straight from standard research (and other Official and Therefore Always Correct) literature. Many of the other articles are genuine, too, but we don’t know which ones.

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**On the Front and Back Covers**
Images of once-famous men and a few women, adapted from photos on file at the Library of Congress and elsewhere.

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**Some Coming Events**

The Covid-19 pandemic has introduced excitingly boundless uncertainty as to whether, when, and where public activities will happen in the near future. In 2022 some will happen teledistantly.

*(See IMPROBABLE.COM for details of these and other events.)*

**June 25-September 11, 2022**
— Ig Nobel Prizes Exhibition, Taiwan

**August 18, 2022**
— Council Bluffs, Iowa, USA

**September, 2022**
— Chicon, Chicago, Illinois, USA

**September 15, 2022**
— The 32nd First Annual Ig Nobel Prize Ceremony & Webcast.

**October 12, 2022**
— Café Scientifique, Muret, France

**Autumn, 2022**
— Ig Nobel Prizes Exhibition, Japan
A Man Who...

Research about particular men (and one woman)
by Alice Shirrell Kaswell, Improbable Research staff

A small group of men — it happens to men more than women — enjoy and suffer a peculiar kind of fame. Each has been deliberately described by authorities, on the public record, as "The man who..." or "A man who...". Yet each man's name has been deliberately, carefully withheld from mention.

The research literature, in all its vastness, has many, many reports with titles that begin "A man who..." or "A man who...". Here are some of them. (Men greatly outnumber women in the published literature of this kind. You can see some of that smaller collection collected in our article "A Woman Who" in AIR 28-3, plus one included here, plus three men who appeared in papers that, unfortunately, had headlines that did not explicitly begin with "The Man Who...")

Man Who Pricked His Finger and Smelled Putrid for 5 Years

Among the most famous of these anonymized men is the man who pricked his finger and smelled putrid for five years. His fame came because the doctors who treated him later wrote about the man and what happened to him, and published their report in a medical journal:


The authors report:

5 years after the injury, in January, 1996, our patient still carried three clostridial species in his skin. This illness is unique and has caused chronic disability and social isolation because of his overpowering odour caused not by suppuration or secretion of toxins or enzymes but by bacterial metabolism.

Further fame came in 1998, when the patient and his doctors were awarded that year's Ig Nobel Prize for Medicine.

Man Who Borrowed Cars


Because of the aneurysm, he was not allowed to resume his previous work and was given an administrative job, in an office above the car park. A few weeks later, he took one of the cars, which were routinely kept with the keys in the ignition, drove to his home, and parked close by. He repeated this behaviour several times over the next few weeks, accumulating borrowed cars in the vicinity of his house.... Over the next 17 years, he spent about 8 locked up, during more than a dozen stays in prison. His misdemeanours were stereotyped. During periods of idleness and depression, he suffered from a compulsive urge to borrow a car... He never tried to sell the cars, but simply abandoned them in isolated places. He estimated that over the years he had borrowed close to 100 cars.
A MAN WHO [CONTINUED]

Man Who Was Married 55 Times


The subject was a pleasant, well-groomed, highly intelligent, dapper, 52-year-old man of French descent who wore imported custom-made suits, silk shirts with 6-inch cuffs and gold-nugget cuff links, white Homburg hats, and square, gold-rimmed glasses. He drove a black limousine with a gold roof and wine-colored upholstery. His voice was soft, unassuming and cultured; his eyes alert and twinkling.

He explained his technique as follows… "I was particularly interested in attracting women with my hat. Every time I met a woman I lied to her. I always stopped at a resident hotel where there was dining, dancing and bridge. Never at a bar. I was a gentleman and attentive. After getting to know a woman I would say what a nice wife she would make. How grand it would be, but that I was no man of money and couldn't keep them in the atmosphere they were interested in. I'd say my family was very religious; I wanted to get away. I'd tell them I was a mining engineer from Alaska and that my only relative was a brother in China who was a missionary. Then we had intercourse. I preferred the French way. I only had natural intercourse with 4 of 55 wives. I was always married to women past 40 and one was 68. They were always widows or divorcees."

Man Who Has Been Smoking Since He Was 12 Months Old


Man Who Walks Backwards


In his early 40s the torticollis began to worsen and was accompanied by increasing lumbar spine pain as he twisted his torso to compensate for a deviated field of vision. An occupational therapist suggested he try walking backwards, and this he did with some success. Although finding road crossing difficult he became rapidly able to manage his shopping, pulling a trolley behind him. Friends nicknamed him 'The Sidewinder'. He exhibits a broad-based gait but no other cerebellar signs or focal neurological features. He now never walks forwards unless asked. Psychiatrically he has been symptom free for many years on a combination of lithium carbonate and antipsychotics. There is no evidence to suggest the backward walking is associated with any psychotic symptoms or disturbance of mood.
Man Who Got Too Close to His Cows

"The Man Who Got Too Close to His Cows," Shane Silver, Donald C. Vinh, and John M. Embil, *Diagnostic Microbiology and Infectious Disease*, vol. 60, no. 4, April 2008, pp. 419-420. The authors, at the University of Manitoba, Canada, report:

We present a cattle farmer presenting with an extensive erythematous plaque that failed to respond to antibacterial treatment. History revealed that his cows were being treated for "ringworm". His diagnosis was confirmed by skin biopsy demonstrating fungal elements and culture yielding *T. verrucosum*. The farmer was successfully treated with itraconazole.

Man Who Got Bladdered


An intoxicated 21-year-old man drove his car into a lamp-post at 40 miles per h (64 km per h). A contrast-enhanced CT scan of the abdomen, done before insertion of a urinary catheter, showed perisplenic, perihepatic, and pelvic fluid, without solid organ injury or free intraperitoneal gas. Delayed images showed contrast filling the bladder with no extravasation…. Blunt abdominal trauma with a full bladder can lead to a bladder rupture which may be missed on a CT scan because contrast, being denser than urine, settles in the dependent part of the bladder and may not extravasate.

Man Who Loved Drunken Crabs

"The Man Who Loved Drunken Crabs. A Case of Pulmonary Paragonimiasis," Om P. Sharma, *Chest*, vol. 95, no. 3, March 1989, pp. 670-672. The author, at the University of Southern California Medical Center, Los Angeles, reports:

On Nov 2, 1982, a 46-year-old man was admitted to the hospital because of chest pain and dyspnea for 6 hs…. He had a large circle of friends from the Far East and the Orient with whom he enjoyed eating raw fish and seafood, particularly the "drunken crab." …

Man acquires the infection by eating raw or undercooked freshwater crustaceans (crayfish and land crabs) contaminated with metacercariae (larval stage) of the worm. "Drunken crabs" (living crabs in rice wine) are perhaps the most dramatic and common source of the infection. The metacercariae hatch in the duodenum, and the larval fluke then penetrates the intestinal wall, enters the peritoneum, and travels through the diaphragm to reach the pleura and lung.
A Man Who [continued]

Man Who Drank a Breathtaking Bottle of Wine


Man Who Couldn't Close His Mouth


Man Who Swallowed a Table Knife


Man Who Swallowed a Number of Clasp-Knives

"Account of a Man Who Lived Ten Years After Having Swallowed a Number of Clasp-Knives, with a Description of the Appearances of the Body after Death," Alex. Marcet, Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 12, pt. 1, 1823, pp. 52-63, 254.1. (Thanks to Dan Meyer for bringing this to our attention.)

Man Who Could Not See What He Could Not Eat


Man Who Swallowed Live Toads


No fair in seventeenth- or eighteenth-century England was complete without a toad-eater or 'Toady': a man who swallowed live toads for his living.
Young Man Who Liked Lizards and Lost His Job


In June, 1994, a white man, aged 19 years, who worked for a large food producer, developed a pilonidal sinus. Salmonella reading was isolated and he was sacked from his job, as was his employer's practice. On inquiry, the young man reported sharing his bedroom with a bosk monitor lizard (Varanus exanthematicus). On further enquiry, the young man reported sharing his house with one bosk monitor lizard, one chuckwalla lizard (Sauromalus obesus), two green anole lizards (Anolis sp), three bearded dragon lizards (Pogona vitticeps), one Argentine horned frog (Ceratophrys ornata), three dogs, two cats, one chinchilla, four mice, and several spiders, crickets, and beetles, as well as his mother, father, and younger brother. Recent guidance on "Food Handlers: Fitness to Work" from the Department of Health which denies the need for negative stool samples on recovery from an acute infection with a non-enteric-fever salmonella species, suggests the action of the patient's employer was inappropriate.

Man Who Had Nails in the Head


In this case report, the authors describe a 33-year-old man who presented with headache due to the presence of 12 nail-gun nails impacted in his cranium and cerebral parenchyma. On the previous day, the patient had reported an accidental nail-gun discharge, resulting in injury to both sides of the head, to the referring emergency department physician. Skull x-ray films obtained at that department revealed the presence of 12 nails (Fig. 1). When questioned regarding the mechanism of injury, the patient was found to be short-tempered, even hostile at times.

And A Woman Who Did Her Own Caesarean Section

A Man Who Ate Many Sorts of Indigestible Items

"The Rate of Passage of Inert Materials through the Digestive Tract," Frederick Hoelzel, *American Journal of Physiology*, vol. 92, 1930, pp. 466-497. The author, at the University of Chicago, reports:

[The] present study of the rate of passage of a number of inert materials through the digestive tract of various laboratory animals, besides the author, was undertaken.

Observations were made on 16 rabbits, 7 guinea pigs, 50 rats, 8 mice, 4 dogs, 2 cats, 1 monkey, 3 pigeons, 1 chicken, and the writer. The chief test materials were colored glass beads, colored glass balls, knots made of colored cotton thread or string, and pieces of rubber, aluminum, steel, silver, and gold....

Since [my earlier] experimentation reported in 1924, the writer observed the intestinal rate on himself by taking from 5 to 100 knots (of cotton fiber) daily and noting their rate of passage during two periods, totaling over 3 years. During the more recent studies, the writer lived in the laboratory - an arrangement which also facilitated close observation of the animals. Typical results obtained on man, when other materials besides knots were taken, are indicated in figure 1.

Man Who Shocked Himself 190 Times

"Just Think: The Challenges of the Disengaged Mind," Timothy D. Wilson, David Reinhard, Erin Westgate, Daniel T. Gilbert, Nicole Ellerbeck, Cheryl Hahn, Casey Brown, and Adi Shaked, *Science*, vol. 345, no. 6192, July 4, 2014, pp. 75-77. The authors, at University of Virginia and Harvard University, explain:

In 11 studies, we found that participants typically did not enjoy spending 6 to 15 minutes in a room by themselves with nothing to do but think, that they enjoyed doing mundane external activities much more, and that many preferred to administer electric shocks to themselves instead of being left alone with their thoughts. Most people seem to prefer to be doing something rather than nothing, even if that something is negative....

Many participants elected to receive negative stimulation over no stimulation—especially men: 67% of men (12 of 18) gave themselves at least one shock during the thinking period [range = 0 to 4 shocks, mean (M) = 1.47, SD = 1.46, not including one outlier who administered 190 shocks to himself].

Man Who Hanged Himself Experimentally