Some things in life are best left unexplained. Ashrita Furman is one of them. This man is an athletic phenomenon whose ability is exceeded only by his imagination.

—JUST FOR THE RECORD (AUSTRALIAN TELEVISION)

I’m trying to show others that our human capacity is unlimited if we can believe in ourselves. I hope that after reading this you are inspired to attempt some feat of your own. The particular event is unimportant as long as it gives you the opportunity to dance on the edge of your capacity. But be prepared—the benefits could be both illuminating and far reaching.

—ASHRITA FURMAN, IN HIS ONLINE BLOG

For proof of the old adage “truth is stranger than fiction,” one need look no farther than Ashrita Furman. If Ashrita did not exist, the marketing folks at Guinness World Records would have to invent him—but even the most imaginative ad person could not conjure up a character like Ashrita, who has now been intimately involved with the book for far longer than any of its staff. In the thirty years since he began breaking Guinness World Records, the men who invented the book have all passed away, its editors have come and gone, the book itself has been bought and sold and sold again, and throughout all of these changes, during the Age of Ashrita it has become the bestselling copyrighted book in world history, and by some accounts the second most widely read book of all time—behind only the Bible.

Fortunately for the more than 110 million readers who have purchased a copy of the Guinness World Records, Ashrita does exist, and no one in the book’s half century has had the kind of impact on its pages that he has or has done more to spread its gospel. Furman was once just like the millions of other preteens who buy the book every year and have made it an annual New York Times best seller for decades. Like his peers, Ashrita studied its pages, and pored over images that are now iconic to generations of readers: pictures of the tallest and shortest and fattest men and women, those with the longest beards, mustaches, and fingernails. Like most kids, Ashrita dreamed of being in its pages, but unlike most kids he has lived
out that dream to epic proportions. After a life-changing revelation, Ashrita got his own picture into the book in 1979 and has never slowed down since, continuing to get into Guinness at a frenetic pace with increasingly bizarre feats of stamina, strength, and creativity. Ashrita Furman is “The Book” taken to its logical, if such a word can be used in the same breath as Guinness World Records, extreme, the mother of all record breakers. Paradoxically, he began as a contemporary reflection of the book, part of its target audience, and thirty years later, the book has become a contemporary reflection of Ashrita: its focus has dramatically turned toward him and his kin, featuring more and more self-invented records, which in many cases seem as difficult to think up as to execute. More than anyone else, Ashrita helped turn the Guinness World Records book from something people simply read to something tens of thousands of people each year strive to get into, and he has done so with his own unique and appealing style. By taking every child’s fascination with the book and marrying this passion to the fervor of a religious zealot, then sprinkling in his sense of humor and showmanship, this soft-spoken man from Queens, New York, has become nothing less than the greatest Guinness record holder of all time.

Yet despite all his success, he remains a humble servant of God. “People magazine called me to be on their fifty most eligible bachelors’ list,” Ashrita, who has taken a pledge of celibacy, told the New York Times. “I told them, ‘There’s only one problem: I don’t date.’” The celibate vegetarian has also never driven a car (though he holds a record for pushing one). He has lived in the same apartment, with few possessions, for most of the last thirty years. Even his stack of Guinness World Records certificates, the largest such collection outside of the company’s headquarters, sits on the floor of his closet in a modest pile. The only one he has on display is his 100th, a special certificate the book made him to honor the accomplishment, the only one of its kind ever printed.

“Ashrita is by far the most prolific record breaker,” Stewart Newport told the New York Times. Newport is the book’s longtime Keeper of the Records, the lofty title the English concern bestows upon its top rules official. As of January 2008, Furman held seventy-two current records, his most recent being part of a group effort: he and an international team with members from fifteen different countries, all motivated by their extreme religious devotion, spent two weeks constructing the world’s largest pencil. They shaped 8,000 board feet of wood and 4,500 pounds of graphite into a seventy-five-foot-long, ten-and-a-half-ton writing instrument, an anachronism* in this increasingly digital age. “It wasn’t easy,” Ashrita wrote, not on a giant legal pad but on his blog. “We had to make the pencil to scale, it had to look precisely like a normal pencil and it had to be made out of the same materials . . . we even manufactured a 250-pound eraser.” Those seventy-two records are just the ones he still claims, but overall Ashrita has set or broken 177 Guinness World Records in his lifetime, far more than anyone in history. More than twice as

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*anachronism — something that is out of its proper time
many, in fact: in 2003 he reached one of his many Guinness milestones when he passed legendary Russian weight lifter Vasily Alekseyev, the previous champion of champions, who had set eighty records in his vaunted career. To match Alekseyev’s lifelong tally, Ashrita demonstrated patience, stamina, and above all, stability, when he stood balanced on an inflatable exercise ball for two hours, sixteen minutes, and two seconds at England’s mystic Stonehenge. Shortly thereafter, he moved into uncharted territory with his eighty-first world record, this one for the fastest full marathon ever completed by someone skipping the entire way, covering the 26.2-mile course in five hours and fifty-five minutes—and in decidedly childlike fashion. For the five years since he passed Alekseyev, Ashrita has stood alone atop the record world.

Like his many incredible feats, Ashrita himself defies generalization. On one level he is reminiscent of a ski bum, except that he gets his adrenaline rush from breaking and setting records. Like the ski bum, Ashrita has structured his life and work in large part around breaking and setting Guinness World Records, and this enthusiasm has taken him not just to Stonehenge but to all corners of the globe.

On another level, one could argue quite seriously that Ashrita is among the world’s greatest athletes. Among Olympians, the decathlon is viewed as the premier athletic event, and the best decathlete is widely touted as the world’s greatest athlete. If excelling in just ten disciplines warrants such respect, why not give credit to a man who is the very best in dozens of them? Ashrita has been called many things in his illustrious career, but the one nickname that has stuck is Mr. Versatility, the superhero alter ego that many fans know him by (yes, he does have fans). Even if you throw out some of Ashrita’s more ridiculous specialties, like finger snapping, frog hopping, or egg balancing, he has more than enough records that are truly astonishing feats of strength, speed, and endurance to put the best decathlete to shame. Ashrita sternly maintains that while some of his records may draw more laughter than respect, each and every one requires a commitment to excellence and a great deal of determination, concentration, and fitness. At age fifty-four, when almost all competitive athletes are retired, Ashrita is at the height of his game, still breaking records at a staggering pace: he bagged more than three dozen in 2006 alone, his best year ever. Despite his frenetic pace over the past two years, averaging one record every ten days, Ashrita’s passion has never waned, and he says, “What I love about the Guinness Book is that I can just go through it and choose something that I’ve never done before, train for it, and become the best in the world at that event.”

Getting into Guinness. One Man’s Longest, Fastest, Highest Journey Inside the World’s Most Famous Record Book. Larry Olmsted. For Allison, Armstrong, Stretch, and Sundance. Many reasons, many years, much love. Adrian Hilton recited the Complete Works of Shakespeare nonstop, going five days without sleep to earn his Guinness recognition. At a difficult point in his life, Hilton said a friend told him: “Adrian, if you give up now, you weren’t made of the right stuff in the first place.” Getting your record officially certified by Guinness takes planning. Here’s how to make sure your achievement makes it in the record books. Ragen Chastain. Follow. Dec 10, 2018 Â· 15 min read. Â· Log into your account on the Guinness website, scroll to the section that says “Evidence,” and click on “Upload Evidence.” You’ll enter all of your information. You cannot submit video evidence through a file sharing site, so you’ll need to upload all of your video evidence directly to their site. 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 easiest way to get into the Guinness book, he says, is to be a top athlete who is the best in the world at a sport. Good luck. CHRISTOPHER CRUISE: For those interested, the Guinness World Records website has a section called Set a Record. It says a record should be "provable, quantifiable and breakable." Larry Olmsted, author of "Getting Into Guinness," found that most have not survived. But around the world, he says, there is a subculture of people who spend a great deal of time trying to set or break records. texts. Getting into Guinness. by. Larry Olmstead. Publication date. 2008-08-05. Topics. Reference, Games / Reference, Games, Games / Gamebooks / Crosswords, Games/Puzzles.