



DO ELEPHANTS JUMP?

With a comprehensive index to
all ten *Imponderables* books

• DAVID FELDMAN

an *imponderables* book

Do Elephants Jump?

An Imponderables® Book

David Feldman

Illustrated by Kassie Schwan

 perfectbound

For James Gleick

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PREFACE

Now we know how exterminators feel.

Almost twenty years ago, we took it as our mission to help eradicate annoying pests from our world. But despite our nine previous books, Imponderables still spring from dark corners like cockroaches in a crumb-filled kitchen.

Imponderables are the little mysteries of life that drive us nuts until we find the solution—mysteries that other reference books won't tackle. Just as exterminators' wallets are fattened by the indomitable spirit of vermin and the phobias of big humans about little creatures, so we are lucky to have found a career stamping out pests one at a time. We may snuff out one Imponderable, but for every mystery vanquished, it seems as if another appears. In 1986, we figure out why some pistachios are dyed red. In 2004, we discover why orange juice tastes so awful after you brush your teeth.

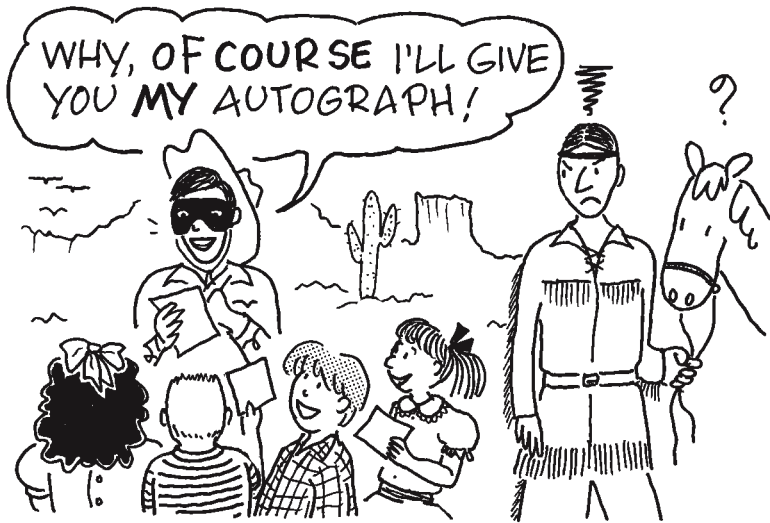
Since our first book, the biggest change at Imponderables Central is the increasing reliance on the Internet. We now receive many more Imponderables submissions by e-mail than snail mail, and of course the World Wide Web is available for research. An exterminator might utilize space-age chemicals but still has to get on his hands and knees to spray the crack under the floorboard. Likewise, we find that we can't rely on the expertise of random Web Sites. We use the Web, but mostly as a place to find the same caliber of experts that we've always relied upon to answer even the most elusive Imponderable.

To celebrate our tenth Imponderables® book, and because it's been several years since the last volume, we're devoting more space to answering your Imponderables (every single one of our Imponderables in this book came from a reader, and the first person to ask each

of the published questions wins a free, autographed copy) and to your letters, even if most of them are taking us to task for perceived malpractice. And, responding to countless requests, we have included a master index to all ten Imponderables® books and *Who Put the Butter in Butterfly?*⁹

Since the last book, there have been two developments we think you'd like to know about. One is that Malarky®, a game based on the Imponderables® books, is available across North America. And www.imponderables.com is now the cyberspace outpost of all things Imponderable. It includes news and information about what's happening at Imponderables Central, a blog written by Dave Feldman, and absolutely no banners or pop-up ads.

One thing hasn't changed since the first book, *Imponderables*. Your involvement is crucial to the fun. The last few pages of the book will let you know how to get in touch with us. But just remember: We vanquish Imponderability, not creepy six-legged things. Imponderables: Let's get ready to rumble!



Why Was He Called the Lone Ranger When Tonto Was Always Hanging Around?

The classic western features a lone hero entering a new town and facing a villain who threatens the peacefulness of a dusty burg. The Lone Ranger, on the other hand, came with a rather important backup, Tonto. Leaving aside questions of political correctness or racism, calling the masked man the *Lone Ranger* is a little like calling Simon and Garfunkel a Paul Simon solo act.

Before we get to the “Lone” part of the equation, our hero actually was a ranger, in fact, a Texas Ranger. *The Lone Ranger* started as a radio show, first broadcast out of Detroit in 1933, created by George Trendle, and written by Fran Striker. The first episode established that circa 1850, the Lone Ranger was one of six Texas Rangers who were trying to tame the vicious Cavendish Gang. Unfortunately, the bad guys ambushed the Rangers, and all of the Lone Ranger’s comrades were killed. The Lone Ranger himself was left for dead. Among the vanquished was the Lone Ranger’s older brother, Dan.

So for a few moments, long enough to give him his name, the

Lone Ranger really was by himself. He was the *lone* surviving Ranger, even if he happened to be unconscious at the time. Tonto stumbled upon the fallen hero and, while nursing him back to health, noticed that the Ranger was wearing a necklace that Tonto had given him as a child. Many moons before, the Lone Ranger (who in subsequent retellings of the story we learn was named John Reid) saved Tonto's life! Tonto had bestowed the necklace on his blood brother as a gift.

When Reid regained his bearings, the two vowed to wreak revenge upon the Cavendish Gang and to continue "making the West a decent place to live." Reid and Tonto dug six graves at the ambush site to make everyone believe that Reid had perished with the others, and to hide his identity, the Lone Ranger donned a black mask, made from the vest his brother was wearing at the massacre. Like Jimmy Olsen with Superman, Tonto was the only human privy to the Lone Ranger's secret.

Not that the Lone Ranger didn't solicit help from others. It isn't easy being a Ranger, let alone a lone one, without a horse. As was his wont, Reid stumbled onto good luck. He and Tonto saved a brave stallion from being gored by a buffalo, and nursed him back to health (the first episode of *The Lone Ranger* featured almost as much medical aid as fighting). Although they released the horse when it regained its health, the stallion followed them and, of course, that horse was Silver, soon to be another faithful companion to L.R.

And would a lonely lone Ranger really have his own, personal munitions supplier? John Reid did. The Lone Ranger and Tonto met a man who the Cavendish Gang tried to frame for the Texas Ranger murders. Sure of his innocence, the Lone Ranger put him in the silver mine that he and his slain brother owned, and turned it into a "silver bullet" factory.

Eventually, during the run of the radio show, which lasted from 1933 to 1954, the duo vanquished the Cavendish Gang, but the Lone Ranger and Tonto knew when they found a good gig. They decided to keep the Lone Ranger's true identity secret, to keep those silver bul-