

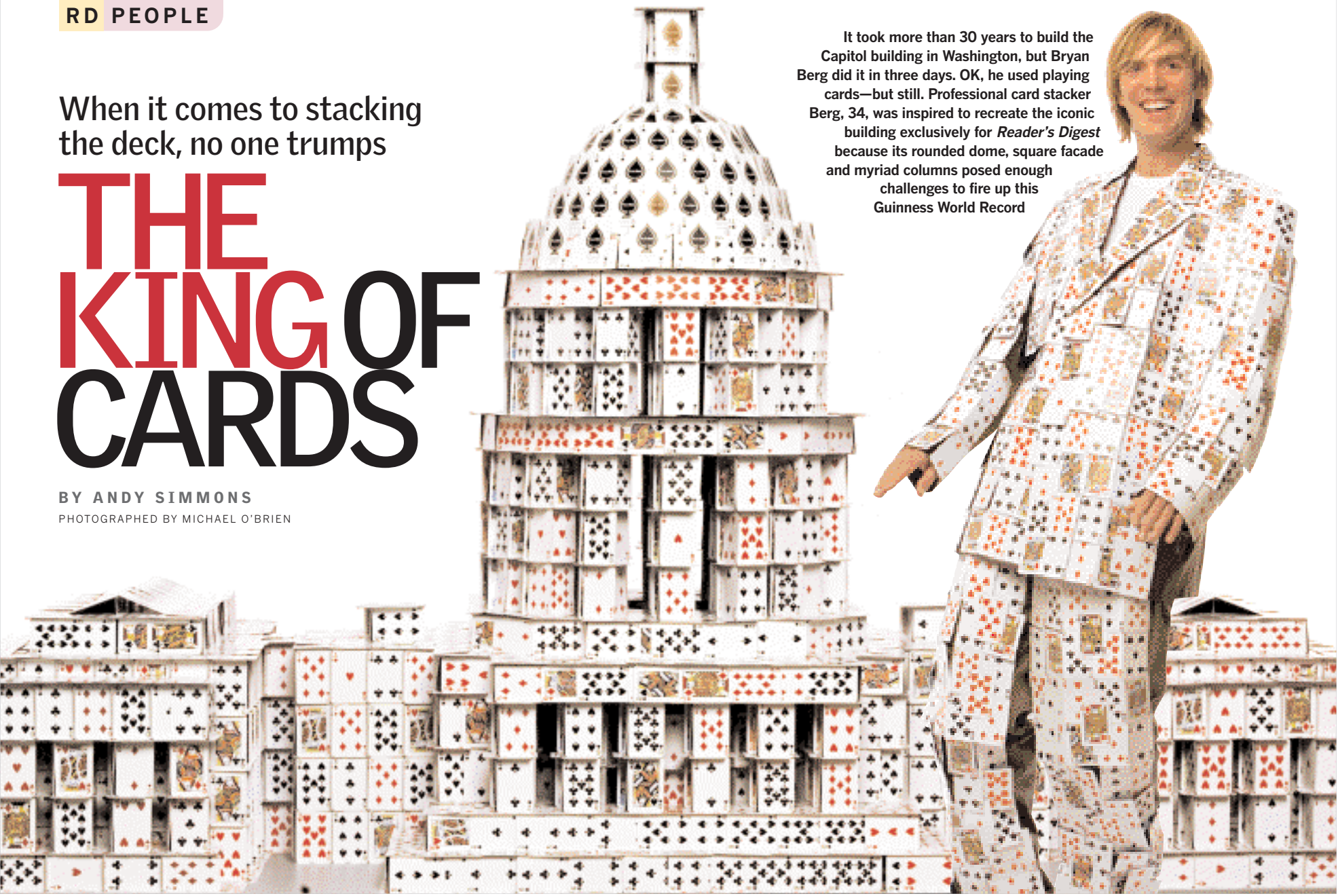
When it comes to stacking
the deck, no one trumps

THE KING OF CARDS

BY ANDY SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHAEL O'BRIEN

It took more than 30 years to build the Capitol building in Washington, but Bryan Berg did it in three days. OK, he used playing cards—but still. Professional card stacker Berg, 34, was inspired to recreate the iconic building exclusively for *Reader's Digest* because its rounded dome, square facade and myriad columns posed enough challenges to fire up this Guinness World Record



holder. To build the Capitol, Berg, a Harvard-educated architect who lives outside Santa Fe, used 450 packs of cards (and no glue, tape or anything else—his structures are free-standing). Though they may look flimsy, Berg's



buildings are quite strong, thanks to a honeycomb design that can hold 660 pounds per square foot. That strength came in handy when Berg built the world's largest house of cards—a replica of Cinderella Castle—for Disney World in 2004. In bed after a long day of work, he received the phone call every card stacker dreads: "A squirrel's loose in the room and it's throwing a party inside the castle walls!" By the time he returned, the guard entry had been toppled, but the castle stood.

A house of cards is by its nature impermanent, so Berg has no problem kissing his amazing creations goodbye. "The art form is not complete until it's torn down," he says.

