

# The Baffling Black-and-White

By MARGARET R. WEISS

**W**HEN the tenth-anniversary edition of *Ripley's Believe It Or Not* reaches the bookstores next month, fans of the wizard of oddities will find an unexpected dividend displayed on the front cover. It is a picture that qualifies as a believe-it-or-not item in its own right.

Choosing this appropriate cover photo was neither a quick nor easy task for Pocket Books art director Sol Immerman. To help ferret out a picture that would exemplify the truth-is-stranger-than-fiction character of Ripleyana, he sought the cooperation of Victor Keppler, vet-

eran photographer and director of the Famous Photographers School. Together they evolved plans for a cover contest, which set in motion a nationwide image-hunt.

Examining thousands of entries, the judges (Immerman and Keppler, along with Arthur d'Arazien, Alfred Eisenstaedt, and Philippe Halsman) were unanimous in their selection of the top prizewinner: a multi-image photo submitted by Charles L. Trainor, Jr., a staff cameraman for the *Miami News*.

The panel was sure of its choice—but not at all sure of exactly how Mr. Trainor's unusual effect was accomplished. One by one, possible explana-

tions were proposed and rejected: "It looks like something I saw out at the World's Fair in Seattle—something done with little mirrors. . . . No, that couldn't be the technique here because there's no reflection of the photographer in any of the images." "Well, maybe it was a waffle lens—and then by projection . . ." "He might have pegged a whole batch of individual prints, arranged a wire framework around them, and shot a new negative of the composite. . . ." "No—if you look closely, there's an almost imperceptible variation in the upper part of each frame. . . ."

It was at this point that the erstwhile Perry Masons of photography decided to get a first-hand "how-dun-it" report from Mr. Trainor himself.

As with most bafflers, the solution to this one was "simple once you know how." Clues: a window screen, one small son, the helping hand of a young daughter with a garden hose. *Operative 13*: the private eye of a photographer who happened to recall one showery day when raindrops had caught in the mesh of a window screen and acted like a platoon of small lenses.

From Charles Trainor's own case file come these details:

"The whole operation took not more than ten minutes. The screen was about two inches from the lens; the subject, approximately eighteen inches behind the screen. I braced an ordinary small window screen in an upright position on our front lawn, positioned Charlie behind it, and had Sharon water it down until it was filled with thousands of tiny 'lenses'. All that was left for me to do was to shoot the picture before the drops burst out of the wire mesh."

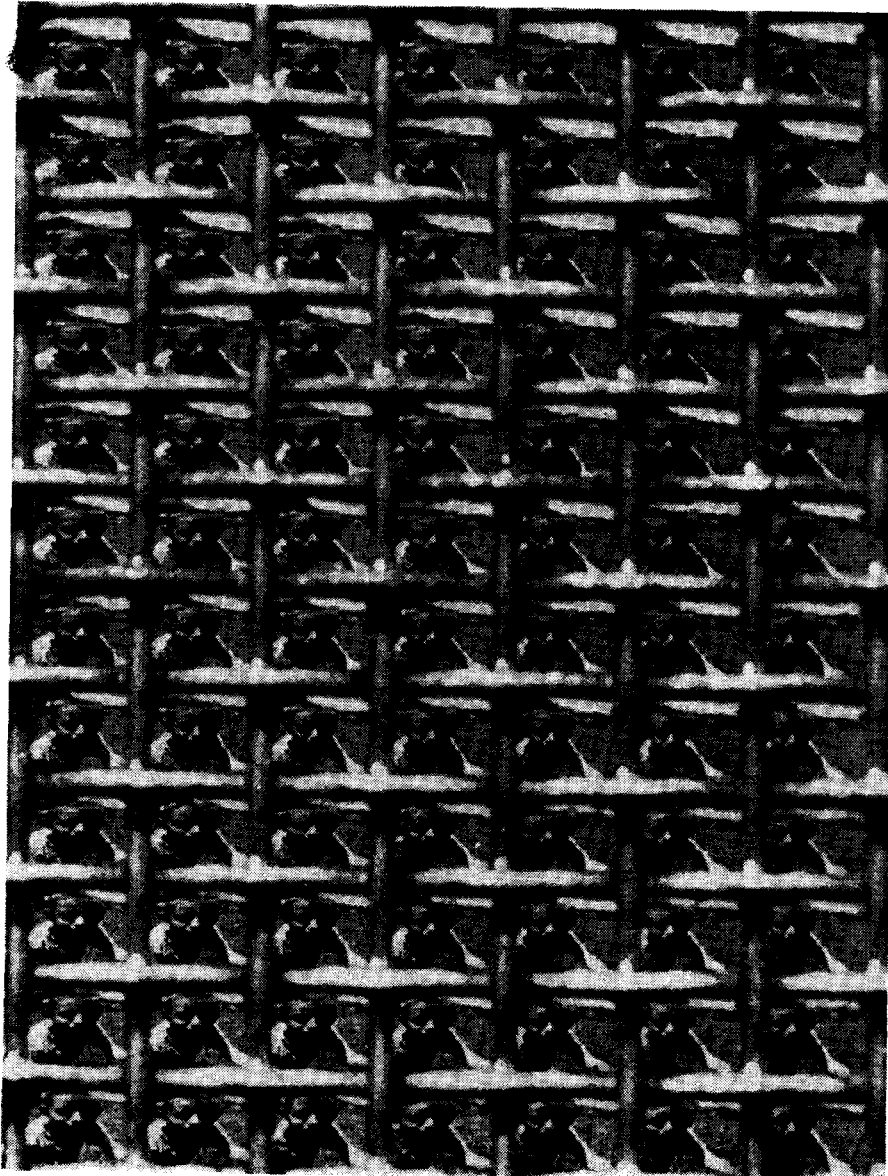
It is unlikely that this "screen test" will ever launch young Charlie on a Hollywood career. But the multiple images seen on 150,000 *Believe It Or Not* covers add up (believe it or not) to 15,750,000 likenesses of his face—which is a lot of exposure in anybody's language, including that of the best of Hollywood press agents.

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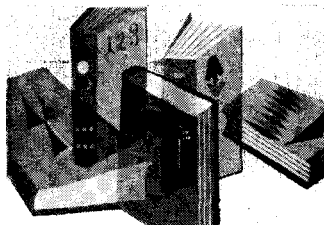
***Believe It Or Not* prizewinning cover photo by Charles L. Trainor, Jr. Droplets of water on wire-mesh screen refract more than a hundred images of one subject on a single negative. Visible in upper part of individual frames are variations resulting from different amounts of water in each mesh. Lens used was a MicroNikkor.**

—*Miami News* photo.

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# Books in Communications



## Getting the Message

**A** FEW YEARS ago an experimental program of health education was undertaken in an isolated Peruvian community 35,000 feet up in the Andes. As part of the program, a film on the transmission of typhus by lice, featuring graphic close-up shots, was prepared and shown to the villagers. It immediately became apparent, however, that something had gone seriously wrong; somehow the message, which had seemed unmistakably clear when the film was made, wasn't getting across at all. The reason turned up when some of the Peruvians who had viewed the film were questioned. They said that, yes, they had seen many lice in their homes, and indeed were plagued by them, but that no one in the entire village had ever been bothered by one of the giant kind shown on the screen.

This incident is typical of the unpredictable hazards that beset anyone who tries to help a country's development by use of mass media. Yet, hazards or no hazards, there are those who believe that radio, television, newspapers, and films are among the most effective instruments available for accelerating economic growth in those regions where the Industrial Revolution has not yet penetrated. One adherent to that view is Wilbur Schramm, director of Stanford University's Institute for Communication Research, who in his latest book, *Mass Media and National Development* (published jointly by Stanford University Press and UNESCO, \$7.50), reports on case studies and research compiled under the aegis of UNESCO. It is meticulously documented and persuasive.

Few readers can fail to be impressed by the obvious correlation between economic development and the existence of modern communications media. In North America, for example, for every 100 people there are 25 copies of daily newspapers, 73 radios, 5.5 cinema seats, and 23.4 television sets, while for every 100 Africans there are only 1.2 newspapers, 2.3 radios, .6 cinema seats, and .07 television sets.

In those countries where mass media are being introduced, the impact is sudden and dramatic. Mr. Schramm tells of one such case: "Once in an isolated village in the Middle East I watched a radio receiver, the first any of the villagers had seen, put into operation in the head man's house. The receiver promptly

ly demonstrated that knowledge is power. It became a source of status to its owner; he was the first to know the news, and controlled the access of others to it. For him and all others who heard, the noisy little receiver became a magic carpet to carry them beyond the horizons they had known."

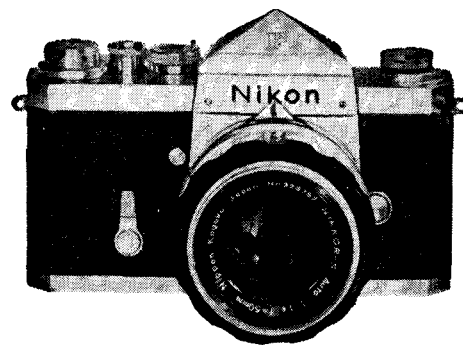
But the mass media, when used with intelligence and imagination, can be considerably more than mere status symbols. They can, at their best, help overcome traditional attitudes that hinder development. They can be a powerful tool for teaching new methods in agriculture and industry. And they can play a crucial role in helping a nation accomplish, in the words of Tanganyika's Julius Nyerere, the "terrible ascent" from the primitive past to the modern present.

Take the problem of agriculture, an enterprise that must be the keystone of any country's economic effort. In regions with subsistence economies, any

suggested change in agriculture is ordinarily viewed with deep suspicion. Over the generations, farmers have developed techniques that, if not notably productive by modern standards, virtually guarantee that at least a minimum crop will be produced, and there is an understandable reluctance to try unfamiliar methods. The task, therefore, is not only to teach better ways of farming but also to bring about a radical shift in attitude. It is, as Mr. Schramm points out, no easy job—but it is one that can be considerably speeded up when an educational program is disseminated by the mass media. Similarly, such things as health and literacy can be substantially improved through mass media.

But if traditional attitudes must so often be changed if progress is to be made, doesn't this raise a serious moral question? Is it right to tamper with a people's deeply held beliefs, to introduce social changes that will painfully disrupt old ways? Mr. Schramm answers these questions by suggesting that "it is very hard to argue against change based on assumptions that, other things being equal, knowledge is better than ignorance; health is better than disease; to eat is better than to be hungry; a comfortable standard of living is better than poverty; to participate actively in one's nation is better than to be isolated at home, too."

—JAMES F. FIXX.



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