



## FOR RELEASE FEBRUARY 17, 2009 ##

Sword Swallowers Association International

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## **President Proclaims Sword Swallower's Day** *Sword Swallowers celebrate worldwide by swallowing together!*

HARTSELLE, AL (SSAI) -- On February 28th, Sword Swallowers around the world will observe 'International Sword Swallower's Day' by doing what they do best - Swallowing swords!

Sword Swallowers Association International (SSAI) President Dan Meyer proclaimed the day to raise awareness of sword swallowers around the world.

Sponsored by SSAI, 'International Sword Swallower's Awareness Day' is set for the 28<sup>th</sup> in conjunction with February as 'National Swallowing Disorders Month'. This year, mayors, governors, and other governing bodies worldwide have been asked to issue proclamations to officialize the day.

"We sword swallowers have been risking our lives to perform sword swallowing for over 4000 years, but many people don't believe it's real, or they think the art has died out," explains Meyer. "We've established this day to promote this ancient art that is still being carried on by a few dozen surviving practitioners, to raise awareness of the medical contributions sword swallowers have made to the fields of medicine and science, to honor veteran performers, and to correct misconceptions and educate the public and medical professionals by putting on demonstrations for medical facilities and the media around the world."

Since some sword swallowers perform charitable work for the medical community to raise awareness of esophageal cancer, dysphagia, GERD, and other upper gastro-intestinal and swallowing disorders, SSAI is encouraging sword swallowers to put on demonstrations at medical facilities and universities during the day. Sword swallowers will also perform at hospitals, nursing homes and orphanages for those who would otherwise have difficulty getting to theaters to see live performances. "The sword swallowers who participate in these activities find them rewarding," explains Meyer. "On February 28<sup>th</sup>, many people will have the opportunity to see sword swallowing firsthand who would not otherwise have a chance to witness it."

In 2006, the British Medical Journal published the first international medical study of the art entitled "Sword Swallowing and its side effects". Co-authored by Meyer and Dr. Brian Witcombe, the year-long study of sword swallowers worldwide won its authors the 2007 Ig Nobel Prize in Medicine at Harvard University. In March, the authors will appear on the 2009 Ig Nobel Tour of the UK at British universities and science centers in conjunction with National Science and Engineering Week sponsored by the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

Until this study, sword swallowers' contributions to medical science had gone largely unrecognized over the past 140 years. In 1868, a sword swallower was enlisted by Dr. Adolf Kussmaul in Germany for the first rigid endoscopy, and in 1906 a sword swallower underwent the first esophageal electrocardiogram in Wales. Other sword swallowers have been prodded and examined by doctors and medical colleges without formal recognition for years. "We want to change all that. That's why we're observing 'Sword Swallower's Awareness Day'."

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"Many of us have been entertaining for years, and we love our work," explains Meyer, a Ripley's and multiple Guinness World Record holder. " 'Sword Swallowers Day' is a great opportunity for us to show the medical community and the rest of the world what we really do!"

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, sword swallows will perform around the world, with some setting individual and small group records at Ripley's Believe It or Not locations around the world. Immediately after the day is over, sword swallows will submit reports of their activities to SSAI for review and consideration for a group record. "Normally most of us perform alone," Meyer says. "'International Sword Swallowers Day' gives us a chance to all work together to be part of something much bigger."

The art of sword swallowing began over 4000 years ago in India, and requires the practitioner to use mind-over-matter techniques to control the body and repress natural reflexes to insert solid steel blades from 15 to 25 inches down the esophagus and into the stomach. With the demise of the traveling circus sideshow over the past several decades, there are currently less than a few dozen full-time professional sword swallows actively performing the deadly art of sword swallowing around the world today.

The [Sword Swallowers Association International](#), founded in 2001 to preserve the art of sword swallowing, is comprised of sword swallows from around the world and maintains a site with general information on sword swallowing for the general public at [www.swordswallow.com](http://www.swordswallow.com).

**LOCAL SWORD SWALLOWERS AVAILABLE** for interviews, comments, and medical demonstrations. [Contact us](#) for additional information on '[International Sword Swallowers Awareness Day](#)' or to schedule a local sword swallower for events in your area on February 28, 2009, or in the UK for the [Iq Nobel Tour of the UK](#) March 6-15, 2009.

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