

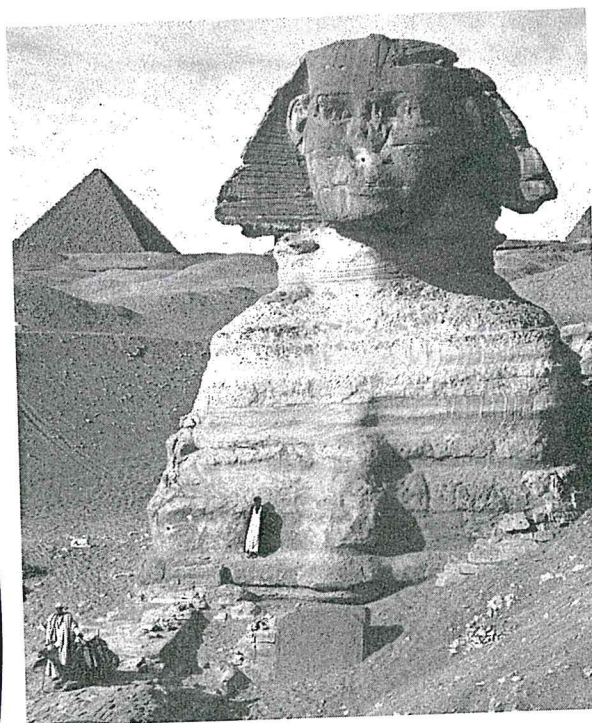
# CRUEL CONSTRUCTION

Check out a modern-day construction worker. Spiffy Day-Glo hard hat. Kickin' steel-toed shoes. Neat-o safety goggles. Now, zip back 5,000 years. If you could spy on a building crew, this is what you might see. Barefoot. Crushed toes and missing fingers, or worse . . . dead on the job. Not only was construction work a tough way to earn a living, it could send a guy to an early grave.

## CHAMBERS OF DEATH

There are some pretty amazing buildings on planet Earth. Giant pyramids, huge cathedrals, massive canals, enormous dams, towering skyscrapers, and dazzling bridges. But stuff like that doesn't just spring up out of nowhere with the snap of a finger. Building something that humongo takes a ton of work and a lot of luck. Just look at Egypt's Pyramids—some of the oldest, wow-iest "buildings" in the world. Sure, they're awesome, but they were miserable to construct, and sometimes a real "dead" end for the guys who built them.

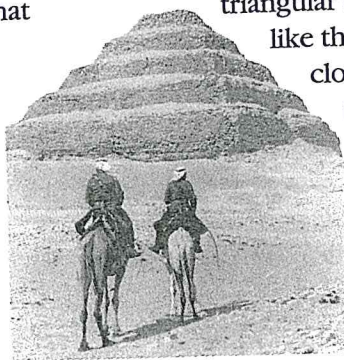
The Pyramids were *supposed* to be the final resting place for the mighty *pharaohs* (*FAY-rowz*)—the kings of Egypt. Unfortunately, they also ended up as the final resting place for some of the construction workers! How did the Egyptians build these enormous things with no power tools, no cranes, no bulldozers, and no blueprints? How did they move stones that each weighed up to 15 tons—about the weight of a school bus? And why the heck did they pick that wacky shape?



Super-Sphinx! This giant guard-critter has stood for centuries.

## Step Right Up!

Egypt's first pyramids are called *step pyramids* because they looked like a flight of steps to the sky. Do *you* have a better idea about how to walk up into the heavens? They were based on triangular shapes because that shape looked like the sun's rays shining through the clouds. A pharaoh named Djoser built the most famous step pyramid in 2611 B.C.E. When he died his body was carried deep underground through a complex maze of tunnels and hidden safely away. But why go to all that trouble?



The ancient Egyptians believed that you actually *could* take it with

you when you died, so the Pyramids were built not only to hold the dearly departed, but all of that corpse's stuff, too: games, clothing, furniture, chariots. Everything! Robbing a grave was an easy way to get rich quick. And in the end, all of Djoser's fancy tunnels did him no good. When archaeologists dug up his tomb centuries later, all they found was one royal mummified left foot.

## History's Grossest, Wackiest Moments

### Big 'Un Going Up!

In 2550 B.C.E., about 60 years after Djoser died, a powerful pharaoh named Khufu started to build *his* final resting place. It had to be grand; it had to be big. It *had* to be the most amazing thing ever built. He was a flashy kind of guy.

Khufu's high priests picked a good-luck spot, the architects laid out rope lines to mark the foundation, and the workers started to sweat! Working conditions sucked. Laborers worked barefoot, wearing nothing more than wisps of cotton that looked like big, baggy diapers. Needless to say, lots of those bare feet were crushed by the elephant-sized stones. Fingers were smashed too, as the giant stones were rolled up ramps covered in squishy mud to help them slide. It was hot, hot, hot under the scalding desert sun. And plenty of people went to *their* graves helping to *build* graves for Egypt's kings.

How do you build a trio of giant pyramids? Somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 sweaty workers labored for 80 years! Historians think that almost every able-bodied Egyptian guy came and pitched in on the building for a couple of months at a time every year. Women, too. They all lived in giant work villages with enormous bakeries, butcher shops, breweries, and, naturally, hospitals for the crushed-of-limb.

Huge stones were floated on barges down the Nile River straight to the pyramid's base. There, the stones were pushed and pulled up the mud-slicked ramps by the biggest, strongest men at the work site. The same slippery mud that made it possible to push the giant stones uphill also made it tough to get a foothold. Slipping and falling in ankle-deep mud as a stone the size of six hippos came sliding back down at you had to have been a major

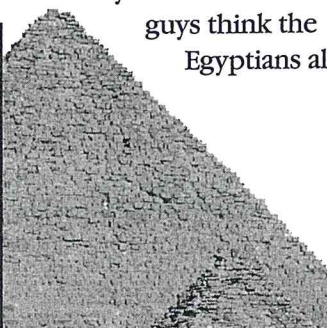
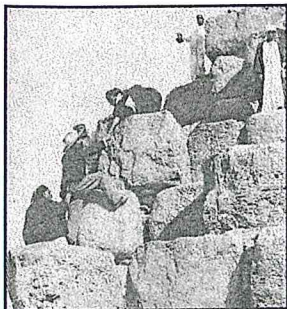
"yikes." Some history-guys think the Egyptians also

might have used giant levers to lift their big rocks into place.

There are three pyramids at Giza: one for grandpa, one for junior, and one for his grandson. Khufu's pyramid is the biggest with over 2 million blocks of stone. His son, Khafre, knew his old man would get steamed if he built a bigger tomb. That'd be disrespectful, so his tomb was smaller. And Menkaure, Khufu's grandson, built a smaller pyramid still. How many stone blocks are in the three Great Pyramids at Giza? Enough to build a ten-foot-high wall around the entire country of France! For more than 4,300 years, until the start of the twentieth century, Khufu's pyramid was the biggest building on the planet—481 feet tall!

When the structures were complete, the pyramids were covered in layers of white limestone so shimmering it was almost impossible to look at them without being blinded. Inside each pointy mountain of stone lay secret chambers and long tunnels that reached deep down below the surface of the Earth. There were false doors and passageways all over the place that led to the burial chambers. Did it work? Did these tricks keep robbers away? Nope! The truth is, those glittery pyramids were giant arrows for grave robbers, marking the exact spot where the king's loot was buried. Just about every pyramid in Egypt was picked clean.

You can't have a pyramid without a decent mummy, so head over to page 188 to unwrap the truth about MUSTY MUMMIES.



Up, up, up you go. Each giant block in these pyramids is taller than a grown-up.

