WHAT’RE THE ODDS!?!

A documentary proposal by M. George Stevenson

Log line:

Joan Ginther has won the lottery four times, gaining almost $20M – really lucky lady or a PhD in mathematics who knows the odds all too well?

Synopsis:

The odds say that that a lottery winner like Joan Ginther, who won the Texas Lottery four times and gained more than $20M as a result, should come along once every 18 septillion years. The odds also say that what’s much likelier is that Ginther had a plan.  After all, she’s a Ph.D. in math who taught statistics at Stanford and lives in Las Vegas – if anybody knew how to predict where winning scratch off tickets were likely to be found, it would be she.

So – how could this be done?  Without Ginther to tell us – she has wisely refused all invitations to discuss her remarkable luck – we will talk to experts in statistics, casino security, state lotteries, and some of the people whose cooperation Ginther would have needed to pull off whatever games she played on what turns out to be a surprisingly scammable system in which millions place their hopes and dreams.

Treatment:

We open with a black screen that asks the question:  How could anyone be as lucky as Joan Ginther who has won the lottery four times and won more than $20M, which we see via news reports. The fourth time she won, she even became a minor celeb for a day as the “luckiest woman on earth.”  According to some statisticians, the odds are greater than the number of all the stars in the universe *TIMES 18* to 1.

What they also say is that some kind of system-gaming is far more likely. Scholars of gambling, casino security experts and state lottery directors all agree: the fix was in.

But what fix?  Since Ginther has taken her money home and, as far as anyone can tell, quit the business, we will look at two potential ways for her, with or without compatriots, to use her Ph.D. knowledge of statistics and probability to find a way to ensure that an investment of approximately the price of a American midsize car could result in a return that would put you into the top 1% -- of millionaires.

The first possibility we’ll investigate is:

THE INSIDE JOB

**[Etc. Etc. etc. until the end of the story]**

A/V Script:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Video** | **Audio** |
| BLACK SCREEN | MUSIC UPNARRATOR: Joan Ginther is a lucky woman: |
| FADE IN:GRFX: NEWSPAPER ARTICLE (1993): Woman wins $5M in Pick 6 |  NARRATOR: She won the lottery. Not only that… |
| DISSOLVE TO:GRFX: NEWSPAPER ARTICLE (2006): Woman wins $2M in Texas Scratch-off |  NARRATOR:...she did it again… |
| DISSOLVE TO:GRFX: NEWSPAPER ARTICLE (2008): Woman wins $3M in Texas Scratch-off |  NARRATOR:… and again… |
| DISSOLVE TO:ARCHIVE FOOTAGE (2008): Four-time Lottery Queen wins $10M | NARRATOR: :... and again. |
| FADE TO BLACK FADE UP: [Numerals] 1 in18FADE UP one [0] every half second for 12 seconds until we see:  1 in 18,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 | NARRATOR: What’re the odds?  Actually, the AP interviewed mathematicians who figured they were one inEighteen septillion.  How big a number is that?  There are…Wait for it,Wait for it,Twenty four zeroes. For reference, there are |
| DISSOLVE TO:EXT. JONES BEACH SEEN FROM ABOVE – DAYFAST ZOOM OUT TOIMAGE OF THE WHOLE EARTH FROM SPACE |  NARRATOR: One septillion grains of sand… …on earth.  Or one septillion… |
| FAST ZOOM OUT TO:HUBBLE TELESCOPE IMAGE OF THE MILKY WAYFAST ZOOM OUT TO:HUBBLE TELESCOPE IMAGE OF DEEP SPACE WITH RANDOM WIDELY SPACED GALAXIES |  NARRATOR:..stars in the… …Universe.Other experts have a different idea of the odds: |
| INT. UNV/RENO OFFICE – DAYPROF. NAME sits at her desk.LOWER THIRD: Prof. NameInstitute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial GamingUniversity of Nevada at RenoPROF. NAME: When something this unlikely happens in a casino, you arrest ‘em first and ask questions later. | AMBIENCE     PROF. NAME: When something this unlikely happens in a casino, you arrest ‘em first and ask questions later. |
| INT. CAESAR’S SURVEILLANCE MODULE – DAYNAMEY NAME, wearing sunglasses, looks out the one-way glass onto the gaming tableLOWER THIRD: Namey NameCasino Surveillance ExpertNAMEY NAME: She must have had some kind of scam working. They need to lock her up. | AMBIENCE    NAMEY NAME: She must have had some kind of scam working. They need to lock her up. |
| ETC | ETC |
| ETC UNTIL STORY IS DONE | ETC UNTIL STORY IS DONE |