

# PENTHOUSE

02242

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE FOR MEN

MAY 1974 ONE DOLLAR

©

**STUNTMEN:  
DEATH BEHIND  
THE SCENES**

**VIETNAM VETERANS:  
175,000 ADDICTS**

**SEXUAL HISTORY  
OF COUPLES**

**EVEL KNEIVEL'S  
LAST JUMP**







a'them peanut-creme doughnuts. Tonight's PTA and I need them for the tasting table."

She closed the window.

Sonny looked up, curled a lip and drove off.

Cobra Lee stomped downstairs to the living room where her great uncle, called Dap'paw, and all of her four children were gathered.

The children were watching the new color television set and Dap'paw was reading his horoscope in the morning newspaper.

"Dap'paw, I do believe Sonny left without bringing up my eyelashes! And no doughnuts, either. I can't go to the PTA tonight without my eyelashes. Tonight's the night I'm making seventh vice-president. And I sure can't go without something for the tasting table. I might have to send you down for a cake. But those old Kroger cakes are so dry! Sonny said his company might be going into cakes, come summer. Benfield Junior! Stay back from that TV! Don't you know it gives off rays! They could eat you up, boy! Dap'paw, you know what Sonny said to me last night? He said I was pushing Sherry Lynn too fast, talking about her getting married. But you agree with me, don't you? If she was to get married, she could get pregnant and have a little ole baby and that would make five generations of us all alive at the same time: Granny Ranny, Big Momma, me, Sherry Lynn and the baby, and I'd want her to name it Tammy. Tammy Renee. A picture of five generations would get in the *Gazette*, for sure!

"Sonny said I was silly, Sherry Lynn being only eight years old, but I told him I didn't mean right now. But we can't wait too long or there won't be five generations left alive. You know as well as I do that Granny Ranny hasn't been strong since Poppa Loppa passed away.

"But I'm still having Sherry Lynn's ears pierced, even though Sonny said over his dead body, and I told him so! I'm having Sherry Lynn's ears pierced this afternoon, Dap'paw. Miss Ada Mae Spaceout, from the College of Beauty, is going to come by. She's pierced hundreds and never had a one to swell up.

"Have you ever seen so much white fur on a carpet? I've just got to take Honey back to the Dog and Cat. She's shedding something awful! I started giving her Quick Dog Gravy 'cause they said it was good for shedding, but it hasn't done a thing and she's still got that bladder infection. Poor little ole thing is just in misery. I had to stop giving her those pills, they colored her pee. When she gets well I'm going to get her trimmed again. They got a new man at the Dog and Cat, used to be the top professional dog groomer at the largest animal hospital in Tulsa. That Sonny! He makes me so mad! He *hates* Honey, and I wanted to take his Dale Car-

negie diploma and have it Perma-Plaques but he took it over to the cookie place and hung it up in a plain ole glass frame."

Dap'paw continued to read his horoscope: "Be sure to act before notifying those who depend on you. Stay away from friends for a while. Avoid auspicious beginnings and do not invest yourself needlessly. . . ."

Cobra Lee took a bottle out of the cabinet and poured some of its contents in her palm.

"Dap'paw, you want some Baby Oil on your nose?"

Sherry Lynn, the eight-year-old, was watching television from a safe distance. She picked up a funny paper and brought it to Dap'paw.

"Just look at her, Dap'paw," said Cobra Lee. "Isn't that the cutest little ole tee-heine? And she has the prettiest little ole legs!"

Sherry Lynn, her hair done in a beehive, had her eyes heightened, darkened lashes and Silver Ice paste on the lids. She wore white plastic boots that curved with her calf and a Teeny-Miss *petite* inflatable bra.

She handed the old man the funnies.

"Dap'paw, fold me a paper puppy."

"Don't bother Dap'paw, Sherry Lynn. Run along and practice your baton. Sonny's mother *hates* that I'm giving her baton instead of ballroom and tap. Do you know all she gave Sonny for his birthday? A cheap little ole Hong Kong fondue set! That's Maxine Mayball for you!

"Benfield Junior, I've told you for the last time, stay away from so close to that TV!"

She picked him up by the arm, dragged him away and paddled him, and sent him out of the room.

"Do you suppose it's his eyes, that he can't see, that makes him sit close? That'd just be awful if he had to wear glasses and grow up a sissy!"

The three children left were watching Jackie Bad Ass on television, all except Leo B, age five, who was coloring and singing to himself: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bobble tells me so. . . ."

He stopped what he was doing and looked at Cobra Lee.

"Dap'paw looks funny," he said.

"Leo B! I ought to smack you! You know I've told you a hundred times not to *notice* that! You march straight up to your room," said Cobra Lee.

She gave him a smack as he passed.

"Dap'paw, you can't pay any attention to what a little ole kid'll say."

Dap'paw said nothing.

He really was funny-looking. He had no chin. Indeed, he had almost no jaw.

Before he retired, Dap'paw owned a Shetland-pony ride with a Sno-Cone business in connection. He had five of the sleekest ponies in northwest Arkansas and a machine that would bite ice into dust in a twink. Those were his halcyon days, before he sprung a double hernia and had come to live with Sonny and Cobra Lee.

But now, he had another chance.

The Greek over at Mountain Home, the man with the wooden leg who traveled with the Donkey Baseball Team, was giving it up

and had agreed to sell Dap'paw three ponies, a popcorn machine, a new ice-crusher and sixteen gallons of assorted fruit-flavored syrups for \$100 down.

Dap'paw was sure he could handle it. He had a new truss that held, and he could take on a helper to lift the ice.

To raise the money, Dap'paw was going down to Little Rock that afternoon and try to hire out to the Dental College again.

When he was a lot younger and the Dental College was located in the basement of the YMCA, Dap'paw had been hired once a quarter to let dental students practice on him. When one of them was able to make Dap'paw a set of teeth that would let him eat cottage cheese, he was considered adept and set to treating the poor people in the clinic. The Dental College paid him \$100 for a month's work in those days. Now they probably paid three times that.

Dap'paw was riding down with a neighbor, Pancho Fink, who had retired from the State Welfare Department in Little Rock six years ago and was returning to the State Headquarters for a ceremony honoring some of his old friends. Before retirement, Fink had been known throughout the State Welfare Department as "Mr. 56S Card," because during his service as Technical Specialist in Charge of Methods he had designed a sort of universal blank form, which was named the 56S Card.

Driving a four-door automobile with air conditioning and wearing a formal brown suit, black homburg hat, white socks, and brushed apricot-suede lounging shoes, Fink met Dap'paw, who was carrying a little metal suitcase and wearing three coat sweaters and an odd jacket of black serge, and they started for the state capital.

One of Fink's grandchildren had been denied a time-pay account at Sears in Pine Bluff and Fink was unhappy about it.

"The young people of today are the customers of tomorrow, and any credit manager who doesn't realize that is selling himself short."

"That's the God's truth, Mr. Fink," said Dap'paw.

"Call me Pancha!"

They stopped at Russellville and Fink bought them each a mackerel dinner with three vegetables and coconut custard.

The waitress was ugly.

"That's a face that would wind a clock!" said Pancho Fink and Dap'paw agreed.

They got to Little Rock and Fink dropped Dap'paw at the Merchants' Hotel, a place he used to stop when he was in Little Rock with his ponies for church conventions. The lady behind the desk, Miss Imelda Smedlin, still remembered him.

"Every time it's hot, I think about those delicious Sno-Cones you used to make. Do you remember? How you had bottles with little spouts and you'd pour different colors?"

"I'm planning to go back into that," said Dap'paw. "Was it hot here last summer?"

"Hot here? And I used to think it was hot in Hot Springs! I'm glad to hear you're going to reopen, but I can't have Sno-Cones any

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## PENTHOUSE INTERVIEW

# KNIEVEL



Mark Hauser

## The greatest motorcycle stunt rider of all time.



# EVEL KNEIHEL

Evel Knievel is thirty-five years old, lean, curly-haired, and handsome but with a flat hardness about his face. This summer he says he is going to drive (or fly, or rocket) a motorcycle across the Snake River Canyon in Idaho. If he makes it, he will have traveled almost a mile through the air. If he doesn't make it, he will still have traveled a mile through the air. That's about how deep the Snake River Canyon is.

Beyond a doubt this hot-tempered, charming, humorous man is the greatest motorcycle stunt rider of all times. He has jumped farther, higher, and over more varied objects (automobiles, snakes, mountain lions, people, etc.) than anyone else.

Born in Butte, Montana, and reared partly by his grandparents after his parents separated, Evel seems to have gotten his share of love from a large family including five half-sisters and one brother.

He is married to a pretty patient lady named Linda. They have two sons, aged thirteen and twelve, and one daughter, ten. Evel is in the process of building a huge house fronting on the Butte Country Club's golf course, where he intends to spend many happy hours if he survives the Snake River leap.

He has broken so many bones that he can give no accurate count. He can't even remember how many times he has been in the hospital. One leg has a steel support, surgically implanted, which measures three inches by two feet. Other bits of metal connect other parts of his interior at various points. He claims to have made a million dollars last year and says he'll break all

records with the Snake River exploit. He expects a paying crowd of one-hundred thousand, television rights, movie rights, book rights, and a fantastic spin-off of souvenirs and mementos.

Evel not only loves to ride motorcycles—he loves to talk. He is the Muhammad Ali of wheels. He also likes to brag about his way with the ladies. If all his love stories are true, he broke Casanova's record long ago. The fact that his wife accepts it all without protest may indicate that Evel is, perhaps, less an alley cat than he would have you believe.

Russ Ewing, who conducted this *Penthouse* interview, concludes that Evel is frantically fearful of what he's doing but that his pride propels him to continue to top each of his motorcycle exploits with something even more sensational. Talking, bragging, and bullshitting helps get rid of the adrenaline that courses through him, nonstop.

Ewing, who is an NBC News reporter in Chicago, followed Evel around that city for six hours trying to get his quarry to sit down and talk. Talk he did, but he did it on the move. The interview began at a lakefront inn at eight o'clock in the evening. It ended six miles away at the Bakery, one of Chicago's top restaurants. In between, Evel drove his specially built Cadillac station wagon in a manner designed to break every traffic law in existence.

Despite this, his passenger felt comfortable, possibly because Knievel is never more confident than when he is in control of a vehicle. And the confidence communicates.

God created all men  
and Winchester made  
them equal—and  
that's just the  
way I think. So you'd  
better watch out!

**Penthouse:** How did you get the name "Evel"?

**Knievel:** There was a guy named Knofol who was notorious in my hometown. They couldn't stop this guy from breaking out of jail. They put him in the county jail, he'd break out. They put him in the city jail, he'd break out. So when they caught me stealing some hubcaps, they put me in with him and they said, "We got Awful Knofol and Evil Knievel in jail." So that name stuck. But I was called "Evil" a long time before that. The guy that actually named me "Evil" was Nick McGrath, a baseball umpire. Every time I'd come up, even in Little League, he'd call me "Evil Knievel."

**Penthouse:** Why?

**Knievel:** It was just the way I looked at people. They figured I was evil, I guess.

**Penthouse:** Why did you change the spelling to E-v-e-l?

**Knievel:** I didn't like it the other way. It was an unnecessary evil.

**Penthouse:** What was it like growing up in Butte, Montana?

**Knievel:** Butte was a helluva town. Used to have more whores working in one square block than they had in the whole state of Nevada. You couldn't believe it. We had a helluva time. We used to throw rocks at them whores in the window and then run. Oh, man, we'd have a helluva time. Had a bigger Chinatown than Boston and San Francisco put together.

**Penthouse:** In Butte, Montana?

**Knievel:** You bet. Greatest town in the world. There's still a few good people left there, too. Used to be 100,000. It's down to about 25,000 now. See, they quit underground mining and all the transients left. Now they're doing open-pit mining. Trucks and big machinery just cut the town in half. I worked in the copper mines for three years when I was a youngster. I drove a truck for a while after the underground quit—just to get out of it. But the thing to be in Butte was either a pimp or a thief. Then you had some prestige. The guys I hung out with all did, you know.

**Penthouse:** You were a good hockey player. Why didn't you stick with that?

**Knievel:** I played semi-pro hockey in Seattle and the Eastern Hockey League; I played in Ontario and Chatham. I think I've participated in three of the lowest paying sports in the whole world—rodeo riding, hockey playing, and motorcycle racing. But I never made no money to speak of.

**Penthouse:** Since you stopped racing and started stunting you've made a pretty fair living. How much did you make last year?

**Knievel:** About a million. I don't know exactly.

**Penthouse:** What ambitions did you have as a kid?

**Knievel:** There's only three things I wanted to do in life: I wanted to jump out of an airplane, I wanted to drive at Indianapolis, and I wanted



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to make love to Liz Taylor. I've jumped out of the airplane. I've replaced driving at Indy with jumping the Snake River Canyon. And Liz is getting old and I'm replacing her!

**Penthouse:** You want us to print that?

**Knievel:** You can print any goddamn thing I say.

**Penthouse:** Tell us about your family.

**Knievel:** I had a small family. One brother, that's all. Oh, I've got some half-sisters. My dad was married again and has three daughters and my mother was married again and has two daughters.

**Penthouse:** What about your father?

**Knievel:** Well, my father and mother were divorced when I was very young and my dad used to love to race motorcycles. Before he got into the automobile business, which he's in now, he was a bus driver in the San Francisco-Oakland Bay area and he had motorcycles and drove race cars. Jeez, I thought my dad was a helluva guy. I used to go down there when he raced midgets and sports cars. A helluva good driver. My brother's also always been a good sports-car driver and race-car driver.

**Penthouse:** What about school?

**Knievel:** My grandmother and grandfather put me through grade school and high school in Montana. My grandmother sent me to hockey school, University of North Dakota. I didn't like school very much. I never did. The only time I liked it was when I had a girl friend and I wanted to go to school and see her.

**Penthouse:** Did you have a girl friend?

**Knievel:** No. I was too busy to bother with

them, I guess. I had one who made me go to church too much. I never really had any girl friend except her—besides my wife—that I really fell in love with.

**Penthouse:** You loved the one that made you go to church too much?

**Knievel:** Yeah. She turned me from a thief and a pimp into a churchgoer, just for a while. But I went back to my thieving and pimping after I broke up with her. And I quit school and went to work in the mines, stealing on the side.

**Penthouse:** Stealing hubcaps?

**Knievel:** I stole everything. One time the police caught me and another boy with about three hundred hubcaps. His dad came up to help get us out of the thing, out of the police station. His dad was a helluva guy. I told them I bought them from a hobo. They said, "You got a receipt?" and I had an old receipt that said, "Sold to Bob Knievel, three hundred hubcaps. Signed, Hobo Joe." Vern Maddox, who was our chief of police, he about fell off his damn chair laughing! He was a helluva guy. Anyway, they said this Hobo Joe receipt wasn't going to go. They got about five or six of us and we were supposed to go up for a trial. So we're all in school that morning and all of a sudden the power goes off and my friend is called to the office after the power goes on. His dad worked for the Montana power company and was out on a line job and he stood up and hit a cable with his head and it killed him and shut off all the power in the county. His dad was trying to help us. So they let us all off. That saved us, his dad's death, it really did.

**Penthouse:** What were you going to do with three hundred hubcaps?

**Knievel:** I sold them for a buck apiece. Christ, I needed a few bucks to go out. I could steal a guy's hubcaps when he was sitting in the car. You know, these ore trains go by, make a lot of noise. A guy's sitting in his car, I didn't care whether he had the radio on or not, I'd just steal the hubcaps right off his car. Every kid in town knew I could do it. But I moved on to bigger and better things. I could crack a safe with one hand tied behind my back, too.

**Penthouse:** Have you spent time in jail?

**Knievel:** Not very long. Maybe five days.

**Penthouse:** For what?

**Knievel:** I don't know. Wrote some guy a check and it didn't clear or something.

**Penthouse:** Let's talk about what's happening now. You once promised to jump the Grand Canyon. You never did. You've been promising for a long time to jump the Snake River Canyon, in Idaho. What about it?

**Knievel:** Well, on the Grand Canyon deal, the Department of Interior, when it was under Stewart Udall, gave me written permission to jump. I had their best wishes for success in my undertaking. *Undertaking*, that was a real nice choice of words. That's what they said—no kidding. Then I went around this country



# EVEL Knievel

shooting my trap off saying I was going to jump it. Made a deal with the Page, Arizona, chamber of commerce. But the Navahos, I couldn't deal with them. The poor, broke Navaho Indians. I could have made that Navaho Indian reservation a fortune if they'd let me jump that canyon. Some of the members wanted to go along, some of them didn't. There was only one Indian in that whole reservation that was on my side. He kept coming to the office when I'd go negotiate and he kept looking at me and grinnin' and smilin' and I thought, boy, I really had it made and that Indian was going to go along with the deal. But it turned out he was the only son of a bitch up there that couldn't understand English!

**Penthouse:** So then you picked the Snake River Canyon in Idaho. Why?

**Knievel:** Well, when I was young I went with my grandparents on several trips. And I went right past Twin Falls, Idaho, which is located on the Snake River and that's where that big canyon is. And I always remembered that canyon and I figured, what the hell, if I can't jump the Grand Canyon I'll go jump that one. And I'll tell you—it's just about as wide there as it was where I was going to jump the Grand Canyon, and that area of Idaho is so much more beautiful than Arizona anyway, and the people are twice as friendly, so I'm better off. I'm gonna try and jump a mile. It's from between half and three-quarters of a mile from edge to edge. And in the bottom of that canyon is Shoshone Falls; it's higher than Niagara Falls, and you can barely see it in the bottom of that canyon. So that tells you how deep that baby is.

**Penthouse:** And you're going to jump a mile?

**Knievel:** That's right. That's right.

**Penthouse:** How much lower is the side you're going to land on than the side you're going to leave?

**Knievel:** It ain't any lower.

**Penthouse:** I've seen pictures of your machine. It's not an airplane. How in the hell are you going to do it?

**Knievel:** A rocket that went to the moon had no wings and no tail, but it had enough power to get there, and that's how I'm gonna do it. I've got enough power to get there. I hope. As long as the right amount of thrust is being applied and as long as the center of lift and the center of gravity coincide with that thrust point, the vehicle will go straight. When the thrust drops off then gravity will overtake it and it will tumble like a box being shoved out of an airplane. It will not fly.

**Penthouse:** Are you using any backup system?

**Knievel:** I'm gonna have a parachute, yeah, you bet your ass. A good one. And I know how to use it. We're going to be ready to go on the 4th or 7th of July, come hell or high water.

**Penthouse:** How many people do you expect?

**Knievel:** It will outdraw the Pro Bowl and the Super Bowl both put together. Live gate. And

I'll make more money than all those football players made on both teams and more than Cassius Clay and Joe Frazier and all their promoters put together. Maybe \$8- or 9- million, conservatively. The canyon jump will be held during a week when there's a big race out there for motorcycles; paying \$100,000 prize money, biggest motorcycle race on the face of the earth. I'm going to try to help to do something for motorcycle racers because I don't think they're getting paid enough prize money. It's a supersport, in my opinion. The greatest sport on wheels I think. I would like to get the canyon jump over with, though, and still be alive—there's no fooling about that.

**Penthouse:** There's no question about your doing it?

**Knievel:** There ain't any ifs, ands, or buts about it. Gotta go.

**Penthouse:** How do you feel, in the pit of your stomach, as the time draws near?

**Knievel:** I can hardly wait for it. You see, I'm going to do it to get rich, you understand? Now when I go to the edge of the canyon all the jerks that never believed me in the first place are going to say, "Now he's really going to back out." And I'm going to look at all I got and I'm going to look at them and I'm going to go back and get in that cycle and just before I go I'm going to turn around and spit at them, right in their faces. And if I make it, man, I'm really gonna have it made and I never need to talk to them again. All I need to do is get along with those who knew I could do it, and who prayed for me and wished me the best, and knew someday that I would.

**Penthouse:** Are you reaching for anything beyond this canyon jump?

**Knievel:** I don't think I have any other goal than just to jump the canyon. A lot of guys asked me if I got a death wish. I do, I do. And my death wish is to die in bed when I'm one hundred years old, with a good-looking broad.

**Penthouse:** Why did you ever start motorcycle riding?

**Knievel:** I don't know why but I just took to motorcycles. I didn't like cars. I think it takes a helluva lot more ability to race a motorcycle than a car. The driver has to do 60 percent of the work when you're on the motorcycle, and the motorcycle only about 40 percent. In automobile racing it's just about exactly the opposite. The automobile has to be about 60 percent. And a race-car driver—hell, anybody can drive a race car. I know women that can probably qualify for the Indy 500. I tell you what—you take one motorcycle and you give me another one that's half as fast as yours and I'll race you for ten laps on any track in this country and beat you. But if you take a car that's twice as fast as what I got, I'm in deep trouble. You take A. J. Foyt, one of the smartest race-car drivers in the world. He won a race up at Pocono for the simple reason that he not only

was figuring his own gas mileage but he knew when the guy ahead of him was going to run out. The guy didn't make a pit stop, so Foyt made one and he beat him—the guy ran out of gas on the backstretch. He's won a lot of races like that. Andretti is the same way—super-smart. The Unser brothers, too. It takes a smart man to win races, to be a race-car driver, to be a champion. You gotta know everything. And I'm not saying that those guys couldn't ride motorcycles, because they could. But I'm saying that it takes a lot more thinking, a lot more luck, and a lot more mechanical endurance in a race car than it does in a motorcycle, where it just takes a lot of guts. A guy can just let it all hang out and let go, that's all.

**Penthouse:** Can you remember your first motorcycle ride?

**Knievel:** Yeah, I had a little motorcycle in California. My dad had taken it in on a trade on a car there, and my brother had already learned how to ride it. And I got on it, went down the street, and hit a mailbox with it. Couldn't control it. I really got in trouble on that motorcycle that day. I almost got killed.

**Penthouse:** What about your first jump?

**Knievel:** The first jump I ever made was over a bunch of rattlesnakes and a couple of mountain lions. This was in Moses Lake, Washington. It was at a racetrack. A big halftime show. They said, "Knievel's going to jump these mountain lions and these rattlesnakes." The guy that owned the mountain lions was afraid I was going to kill them so he put both of them close to the takeoff ramp. They had fifty or a hundred rattlesnakes in boxes. So I jumped over them and when I landed I knocked the last box apart and the damn snakes got out. This guy started running around trying to catch them! And I rode back by those mountain lions because I was so excited I didn't know what I was doing. There wasn't any grandstands and these snakes started crawling up there in the crowd! It was funnier than hell. I just buzzed on out and watched it from up on a hill somewhere. People were runnin' every which way. It was a real crowd-pleaser, you might say!

**Penthouse:** Tell us about the first jump. Why did you decide to do it?

**Knievel:** I'd always been interested in the stunt business, as well as the racing business, and I thought that if the auto industry could support an auto daredevil like Joey Chitwood or Daredevil Lynch maybe the time had come that the motorcycle industry could also support a stunt thing. So I got a whole show together and a lot of people in Los Angeles and all over the country wanted to help me. They got together and paid me a few bucks, and Norton gave me the motorcycles and I went down the road. But when I'd get hurt, bang! The whole show would be hurt because the other guys didn't have any business capabilities or any business judgment. They'd have to wait until I got better. So

they would quit me all the time.

**Penthouse:** How many times have you been hurt? Do you remember?

**Knievel:** Oh, Christ, I get hurt about once a month. In this business you jump a motorcycle through the air and you can't control it. It's not an airplane. Like the Snake River Canyon. I'm going to put the thing off the ramp, 4,000 pounds of thrust, go 300 miles an hour through the air and it's going to go where it wants to. Once, in Oklahoma City, I jumped three cars with a broken back and a cast and everything on. It's the only time I've had bad rapport with some of the press. This one guy says, "Well, I wouldn't expect Jack Nicklaus to play golf with a broken hand and I didn't expect Evel to jump only three cars... he should have come back when he could jump about thirteen." But the promoter had obligated himself for about 10,000 bucks—what was I supposed to do? I was trying to be right with him. Jeez, it was a tough deal. Christ, I'm getting... I'm thirty-five years old. I fell off in Wisconsin last fall and broke my back, my upper back. And I broke my hand. I've busted my back three times as bad as you can break your back. You know what I haven't done? I've never caught the spinal cord. That's the only thing that paralyzes you—when you get that spinal cord pinched.

**Penthouse:** You've got plenty of money. Why do you keep doing this?

**Knievel:** It's an impossible question to answer. There's only three mysteries to life, as far as I'm concerned—where you came from, why you do what you do, and where the hell you're gonna go. You don't know and I don't know. Nobody knows that. I just do it because I'm me.

**Penthouse:** A lot of people think you're some kind of nut.

**Knievel:** Well, they're right, too. I'm glad there's people like that, I'll tell you why. If it weren't for them, I wouldn't have made three or four million bucks and them idiots wouldn't have nothing to do or spend their money on, so it all works out just fine.

**Penthouse:** In other words, they're part of the plan?

**Knievel:** Part of the plan, yeah. There's some that are pulling for me and are fans of mine. They aren't the people I'm talking about. That guy who comes to see me get killed and who thinks I'm an idiot, I love to just spit in his face and walk away, and take his money that he paid to get in and go and spend it somewhere, have a drink on him and don't even invite him along.

**Penthouse:** Do you think there are many people who do come to see you get hurt or die?

**Knievel:** No. Well, there's always a percentage. There's always a percentage that go to Indianapolis to see those guys risk their lives. They go to see somethin' happen. Wanna be there if it happens. But 60 or 70 percent of your

When a woman can't  
be a real good woman,  
she wants to be something  
else—that's  
where women's lib  
started at.



John R. Hamilton-Globe

fans are there to pull for a guy. They don't want to see anybody get killed or hurt. I know I don't. Nothing sickens me worse than to see an accident at a racetrack. I was there at Indianapolis last year with Swede Savage, and Swede was one of my closest friends. Swede and I raced motorcycles together in California. He was with me the first day I ever had this idea for the stunt show, and he lost his life at Indy. It sickens me. You go to a racetrack and there's a bad accident just at the start of the race and it just kinda kills the whole race day. It kills the excitement. And that's because the majority of people came there to enjoy the race, to see a loved one win it, or a friend win it, and, boy, when there's a bad accident and that quietness falls over the racetrack, that should answer the question for you.

**Penthouse:** Do you have many imitators?

**Knievel:** There's a lot of 'em around jumping and I think the greatest compliment that they could pay me is to want to do what I do. There's even a girl jumping now. I think she can outjump all the rest of those guys, to tell you the truth.

**Penthouse:** Are you read to die in the Snake River Canyon?

**Knievel:** The worse thing that would happen is dying, that's the worst thing that could happen. If I did, then I'd just get somewhere quicker than you're going to and I'll wait for you—that's all. I'll sit there and have a beer and wait for ya.

**Penthouse:** And where would that be?

**Knievel:** Well, I tell you what, I'd like to go to the Evel Knievel heaven. The Evel Knievel heaven is a heaven that is kinda like the one I'm living in here on earth. First of all, at the pearly gates would be a forgiving God—so I could get in, see? Secondly, my wife and children would be there. Thirdly, there'd be a big draft-beer system constantly bubbling out of the ground there, on a golf course. And the golf course would be one I could shoot scratch on. It would be beautiful, too. And there'd be some night life, good-looking broads—easy, good-looking broads. Then there'd be a motorcycle jump there that I could jump and never miss. That would be my heaven. There's some people think we're going to go up there and sit around and play harps and wear robes and sandals or something, but I don't think that's what I want to do. If I went to that kind of a heaven I'd be doing nothing but sittin' there talking to JFK and the Pope, and I don't really think I could carry on a conversation with them because I don't think they'd be interested in what I have to say, and I sure in hell wouldn't be interested in what they have to say.

**Penthouse:** You're married.

**Knievel:** Fourteen years.

**Penthouse:** And you've got three children.

**Knievel:** Don't they worry about your getting killed?

**Knievel:** Oh, yeah. They don't like to see me



# EVEL KNEIVEL

jump far. When I'm going to jump long distance they say, "What are you going to do that for?" My two little boys can ride motorcycles like you can't believe. They're chargers. And my little girl rides a mini-bike around but she don't do too much of that. She's like her mother. My little kids have been jumpin' for about five years, but I stopped 'em from it. I want them to continue if they want to, but they got a lot of baseball, a lot of football, a lot of hockey, everything to do while they're young, and they've got all their lives to do this. This is a business, a big business and a tough business. I hope to make enough money in the next five years where I could shut them off from maybe wanting to jump the motorcycle like I do because they're going to have to pay the price for success in this business and the price is getting half-killed. And I don't want my kids to have to do that. I'd rather have them go into some other business with the money that I make.

**Penthouse:** Are you raising your children in a religious atmosphere?

**Knievel:** My children are God-fearing. I'll tell you that, just like I am. People are stupid. They'll say, "What do you think about before you jump; just before you go?" Well, the dumb bastards, I think the same thing they'd think if they had to jump. I pray. That's the only thing I got left.

**Penthouse:** Doesn't your wife get mad at you for risking your life?

**Knievel:** Listen, my wife flies to see me once every two weeks. She's like a little girl friend to me, see. She was first my girl friend and then she was my lover and then she became my wife and she's the mother of my children; four things to me. When I got put in the hospital in Detroit they gave us a double bed in the hospital. When I was in Vegas she never left my bedside from the day I got hurt until the day I got out of the hospital, thirty days later.

**Penthouse:** But don't you feel you put your wife under too much pressure?

**Knievel:** Oh, sure. One time I'd been home for about six months and I was really busted up. I'd been hurt in Reno and I was on crutches and could barely get out of the house, and my buddy, Ray Gunn, he came to get me in one of my cars, and I could hardly get down the steps with the crutches in the snow, but I did it. I kissed her good-bye and I left the house and then I remembered I'd forgotten my briefcase. And I went back and knocked on the door and there was no answer and Ray came and helped me get in and I found her on the bed crying. She was all broke up. She put on that false front in front of me all the time to help me have strength so I could keep going, you understand? But boy, she had just gone to pieces. She was just crying because she was afraid I was going to get hurt. That was the first time I saw her like that, and I really realized

What I do, according to the laws of society, may not be exactly right. But the laws of society don't constitute my morals. I constitute 'em.



what I put her through. She saw me get it the first time I ever got it. She's seen me bust my hips, my pelvis, my back, everything. But the thing I was trying to say was I remember a photographer said, "I've got to film you. I've got to show that you're human. I've got to film your hands and feet and the expression on your face and your lips and eyes so that people will know and so they can actually see ya." And my wife says to him, "He ain't human. He's superman. There ain't nothing going to happen to him. He is not a human being. He's different." She's got herself thinking that because it's working for her.

**Penthouse:** You've been signing autographs all day. How are you going to spend your night?

**Knievel:** Well, I'm gonna go downtown and get in about four or five in the morning, just like I did last night.

**Penthouse:** But you can't keep that up day after day.

**Knievel:** I've done it all my life. And I ain't planning on quitting now.

**Penthouse:** When you get ready for a big jump, don't you go into training, like a fighter and cut out all this stuff?

**Knievel:** No. I drink more booze, spend more money, live better. I mean, I'm gonna do the same thing Jesus Christ did when he had his last supper. I'm gonna invite a bunch of friends in and have a real feast, have a good time. I'm not going to go to some McDonald's hamburger joint and go home and go to sleep. I want to live a little bit.

**Penthouse:** But you can't be at your best like that, can you?

**Knievel:** I've been riding a motorcycle for twenty-five years and I know what I'm doing. I do a lot of push-ups, a lot of sit-ups. Keep myself in good shape. I mean I'm not doing something that's so athletic that I gotta have great physical stamina. But I gotta be in shape or I couldn't even look like I do. But hell, I just don't want to get so drunk or so fouled up that I go out there the next day and have a real bad hangover. I don't do that. But Jesus Christ, you know what? I'm gonna try and spend a million dollars in Butte, Montana, and Twin Falls, Idaho, the week before I jump the canyon. A million-dollar drunk.

**Penthouse:** How can you spend a million dollars in Butte, Montana?

**Knievel:** Well, that's why I also said Twin Falls, Idaho. Between the two of them. Well, I'll come close to it. If you don't believe me, just bring your suitcase and a shot glass and head in that direction. Because I'll guarantee you, you ain't going to see nothing like that for the rest of your life. The governor of Montana is already planning on calling in the California National Guard just to help him. The big party's going to start at a tavern in Butte, Montana, called the Freeway and that's where it's gonna go

—right down the freeway. I spent twenty-five or thirty thousand dollars in Butte when my motion picture was made there. Partying and fighting. I left town because I broke both hands. Got in lots of fights, lots of 'em. You know, come back, do a picture, some guy's jealous, says something to you. Anybody say something to me, I'll knock their goddamn head off. I knocked the heads off the Hell's Angels. I'll knock the head off any son of a bitch who opens his mouth to me.

**Penthouse:** But you're not really mad when you do it?

**Knievel:** Oh, yeah, I am. I gotta get mad. I mean, I don't fight unless I'm mad. I get fighting mad. I fight a little bit more when I'm drunk.

**Penthouse:** Why don't you like the Hell's Angels? What happened with them?

**Knievel:** In the Cow Palace in San Francisco the announcer made some comment that I would set the Hell's Angels back twenty years if I jumped the canyon and lived. And they took offense to it and one of them threw a tire iron at me when I was going to make my jump. When I came back into the Cow Palace he was standing in the middle of the floor giving me the finger, and there was 15,000 people there. The joint was loaded. They came to see me and not him. I always wanted to punch one of them and he was a little bastard so I punched him, just as hard as I could. Knocked him flat on his ass, right in front of everybody. Then a bunch of them jumped out of the grandstand, but that was a mistake because then a bunch of San Francisco people jumped out of that grandstand, and they took fifteen Hell's Angels to the hospital. Put those bastards right where they belonged. They all got their ass behind bars right now for being a bunch of hopheads and a bunch of murderers and that's right where they belong. I don't like 'em. And if I ever see one of them around again that bothers me I'm liable to shoot him. God created all men, and Winchester made 'em equal, and that's just the way I think. I'm getting mad—you better watch out, I'm liable to punch you!

**Penthouse:** Let's change the subject! Are you opposed to other motorcycle gangs?

**Knievel:** I feel that any club that wants to wear their colors, ride motorcycles in any way, shape, or form, should be treated with the same respect that any citizen is treated with as long as they do not step on other people's toes. There's a lot of clubs that are considered outlaws, who like to go out and do their own thing; wear their bluejeans and their jackets and I think they should be left alone. I've gotten help from these clubs, and had all of them come and apologize to me for what happened in San Francisco—more than you would ever think. The guys come and said, "We're sorry it happened and we hope that the public doesn't

hold it against us," because they knew what a bunch of murdering hophead bastards those Hell's Angels were.

**Penthouse:** You own several airplanes. And you fly them. But you don't have a license.

**Knievel:** I don't need a license to fly an airplane. I fly one any damn place I feel like it. Hell, I fly from Seattle to Butte and Butte to Billings, Butte to Salt Lake City.

**Penthouse:** What would happen if an FAA guy walked over to you and said, "Let me see your license"?

**Knievel:** I don't have one! I got nobody in the airplane—the FAA can't stop me from flying an airplane. I'm not going to violate nothing. What's a license mean? How are they going to stop me from flying around in the air up there? I mean, that's silly. I can fly a 747—there isn't anything I can't fly. I've had pilots—airline guys—who will fly with me once in a while. If I need to go into bad weather I always take a man with me, a back-up man. In bad weather you need a professional. Evel Knievel is capable of herding an airplane around the sky. I'm not really capable of flying one, don't let me mislead you. But I fly anything.

**Penthouse:** Ever cracked up?

**Knievel:** No, no. Well, I knocked a wingtip tank off of one going into Denver, to the racetrack there. My men forgot to take the flagpole down. I had a big twin Cessna. Knocked the wingtip tank right off. But I landed it, got out, did my wheelies, rode my jet, made the jump, jumped back in and took off again. Flew it right out of the racetrack and had 30,000 people standing right on the hill. They were afraid to come down on the track! The son of a bitch gets a little wobbly! I've had several of my pilots get their licenses jerked. I've fired fourteen of them. I've thrown them off runways and their clothes behind them. The only one who stayed with me is the first one I ever had—a guy named Denny Davis. I've fired him three or four times, but he's managed to stick it out. He's a good kid. Last time I fired him was because he didn't want to catch my motorcycle in L.A., at the top of the ramp. He was afraid he might get hurt. I said, "You get hurt? How about me?"

**Penthouse:** Catch your motorcycle? What do you mean?

**Knievel:** Well, I had a big ski-jump ramp built up on the top of the Coliseum and I was buzzing that motorcycle up and down the ski-jump ramp and then going off the jump. Down below I was jumping fifty-one cars. Piled some of them up as a pyramid and I jumped over them. That's the world record, fifty-one. Davis saw me trying to ride up it once and I fell on my ass and bounced in the grandstands and the motorcycle went over the top of me and all it did was break my finger—lucky! But he said, "Boy, I'm not even going to stand up here. This guy's going to kill me." That's a funny thing for

a guy to say when I'm the one that's risking my neck. Anyway, I got him back working for me.

**Penthouse:** Do you gamble very much?

**Knievel:** I gamble on the golf course. Or, I like to bet on things like the jump. I like to bet on my ability to do things. This guy, Amarillo Slim, is supposed to be such a big shot gambler. He's just a chicken-shit nit, that's all Amarillo Slim is.

**Penthouse:** You want that in print, too?

**Knievel:** You bet your ass, you can print it. He's the kind of a guy that will ride along in a golf cart alongside of you and want to bet on you can't shoot at a certain score, but he ain't got enough ability to get out of the golf cart and play, because he's the biggest choker in the world.

**Penthouse:** Have you ever been involved with drugs?

**Knievel:** Never. And I think that's one reason that I've healed up so quickly. That's one reason I didn't die when they said I'd die. That's one reason I kept walking when they said I'd be crippled—because I've always tried to live right. I don't drink a helluva lot. I've never taken any narcotics and don't smoke cigarettes. I try and keep myself in pretty good physical shape. You know, I was in a lot of trouble when I was a young kid. You don't need to tell a kid what's right and what's wrong, he knows it. You have to help a kid. When you find something he's interested in, if you'll help him to do a thing and get him excited about it, I don't care what it is, he'll want to do it and he won't want to get into trouble. He ain't got time. I think narcotics is a crutch for people who are not of sound mind and sound body. I guess you'd say I love a natural high. I mean, I don't need it. I don't drink, for Christ's sakes, unless it's social. If it's not there, I don't give a damn. I think the narcotics thing is coming to an end. I think we're getting through it—I sure in the hell hope we are. Being an entertainer, I know entertainers whose drug habits cost two, three thousand dollars a day. The police know it. Why don't they bust the entertainer, instead of busting some poor kid for smoking pot? There's some corrupt goddamn cops that are taking payoffs. The only way anybody can support a drug habit like that is to have somebody out there stealing for him.

**Penthouse:** You've said Joe Louis was your idol. Why?

**Knievel:** I used to love to box. Didn't even have a punching bag. Had some gloves. My dad was in the Second World War and he sent me his canteen from Japan, so I hung it up in my grandmother's upstairs and I used to use it for a punching bag. I heard every fight Louis had. I heard the recordings. I heard him fight Schmeling, I heard him fight Billy Conn, I heard him fight Jersey Joe Wollcott, heard him fight Max Baer, heard him fight everybody. My



# EVEL KNIEVEL

Dad got his autograph for me one time and I carried it in my wallet for about twelve years. I met him in Caesar's Palace. And now nothing makes me feel better than when a little colored boy comes up and asks me for an autograph, or his dad or mother will bring him. I just love that. That little guy looks up to me like I looked up to Joe Louis. You asked me before why I keep doing it. That might be one reason.

**Penthouse:** Let's get back to women. Do the ladies find you attractive?

**Knievel:** Listen, I went to a place called Filthy McNasty's in Hollywood. And pretty soon these two gals—a blond and a brunette—started to fight about which one is going to sit by me. Damn, they had a hair-pulling contest and everything! And I just ordered up a beer there and watched them; it was funnier than hell. The blond won the fight, so I took her from Filthy McNasty's with me to my hotel. Now I get her up there in the room and she gets excited. She scratched my back so damn hard that it upset me. I didn't want to go home and have my wife see something like that, so I threw her

outside the hotel room! Yeah, I did! Threw her right out!

**Penthouse:** You want us to use this?

**Knievel:** I don't give a goddamn if you use it, it's the truth!

**Penthouse:** So you're not opposed to extra-marital sex?

**Knievel:** I think if a guy's married and he has a little sex with another woman he can kinda compare her to his wife, and I've done that—for fourteen years. And I still got the same wife. That means she's pretty goddamn good.

**Penthouse:** Well, that sometimes causes great problems.

**Knievel:** Not if you got a good wife.

**Penthouse:** How would you react if your wife told you she wanted a little extra-marital sex?

**Knievel:** About like any other man.

**Penthouse:** And how's that?

**Knievel:** I wouldn't like it. I think if a man is a good enough man, his wife wouldn't want to do that.

**Penthouse:** But it's okay for the man?

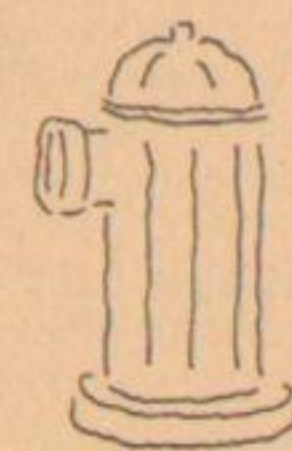
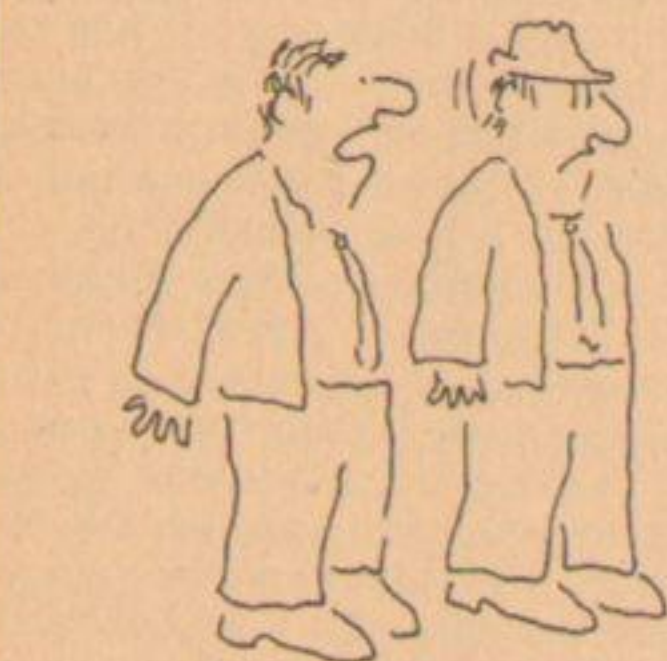
**Knievel:** I think so.

**Penthouse:** What do you think about women's liberation?

**Knievel:** I think it's a bunch of horseshit, that's all. A woman should be a woman. When she can't be a real good woman she wants to be something else, and that's where women's lib all started at. That's what I think about it.

**Penthouse:** Are you concerned about your public image?

**Knievel:** In some cases I am, and in some cases I'm not. If I really wasn't, I could walk away from this canyon jump and never have to do it. Then again, maybe I don't give a damn about the public. Maybe I just want to be right with myself and not be a phony, even if I have to die jumpin' that canyon. I don't think life is any popularity contest. The only guy I really gotta be with is the guy I look at when I'm shaving. I know what I think of my wife, what I think of my children, what I think of my immediate family. What I do, according to the laws of society, the way I live, may not be exactly right. But the laws of society don't constitute my morals. / constitute 'em. O+



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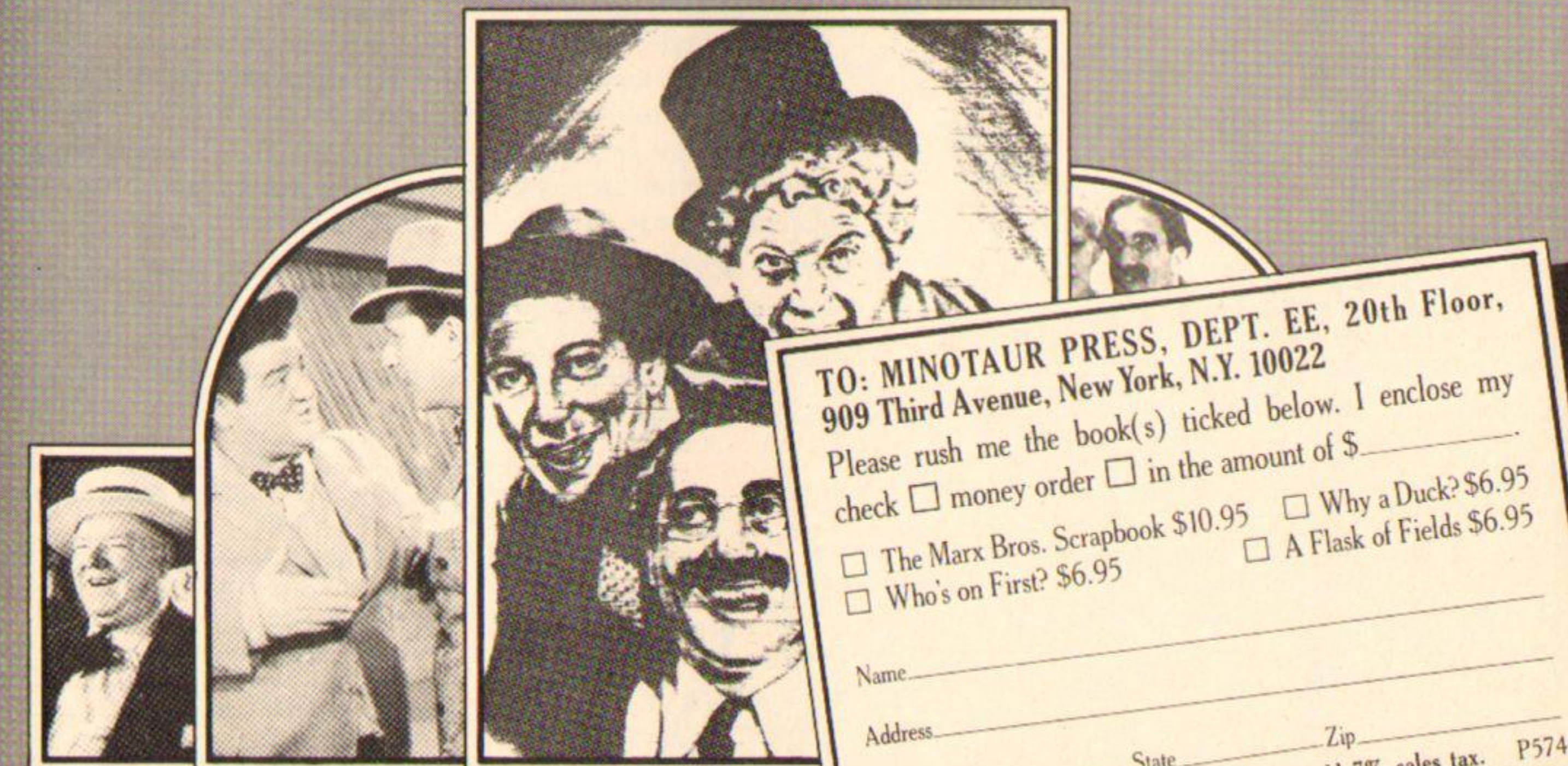
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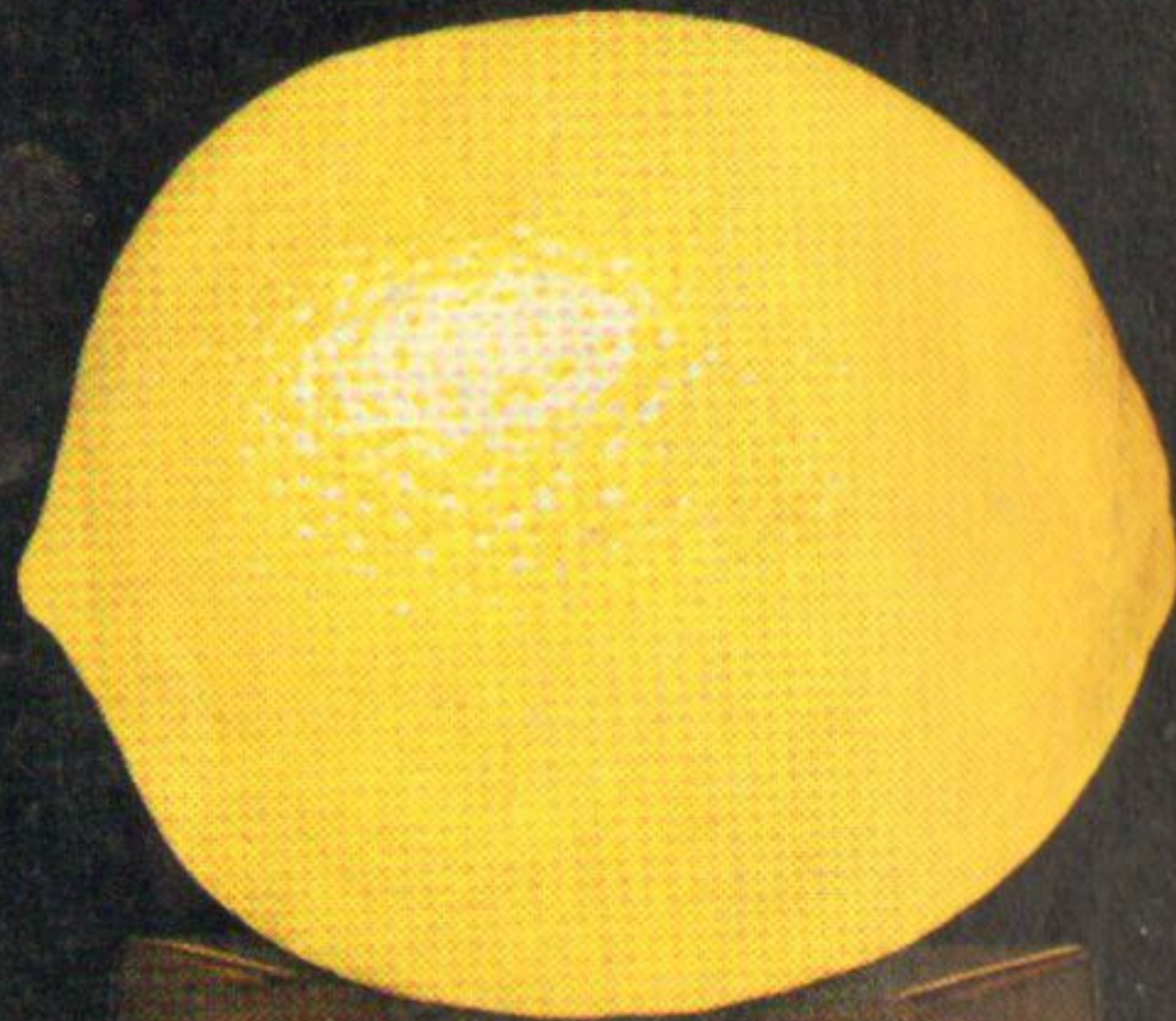
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