

# X•zone



## Daredevils and Show-offs

by DAVID HARRIS



Can people  
really  
swallow  
swords?



Think you  
could tame  
me?



Who was the  
first woman  
to loop the  
loop?

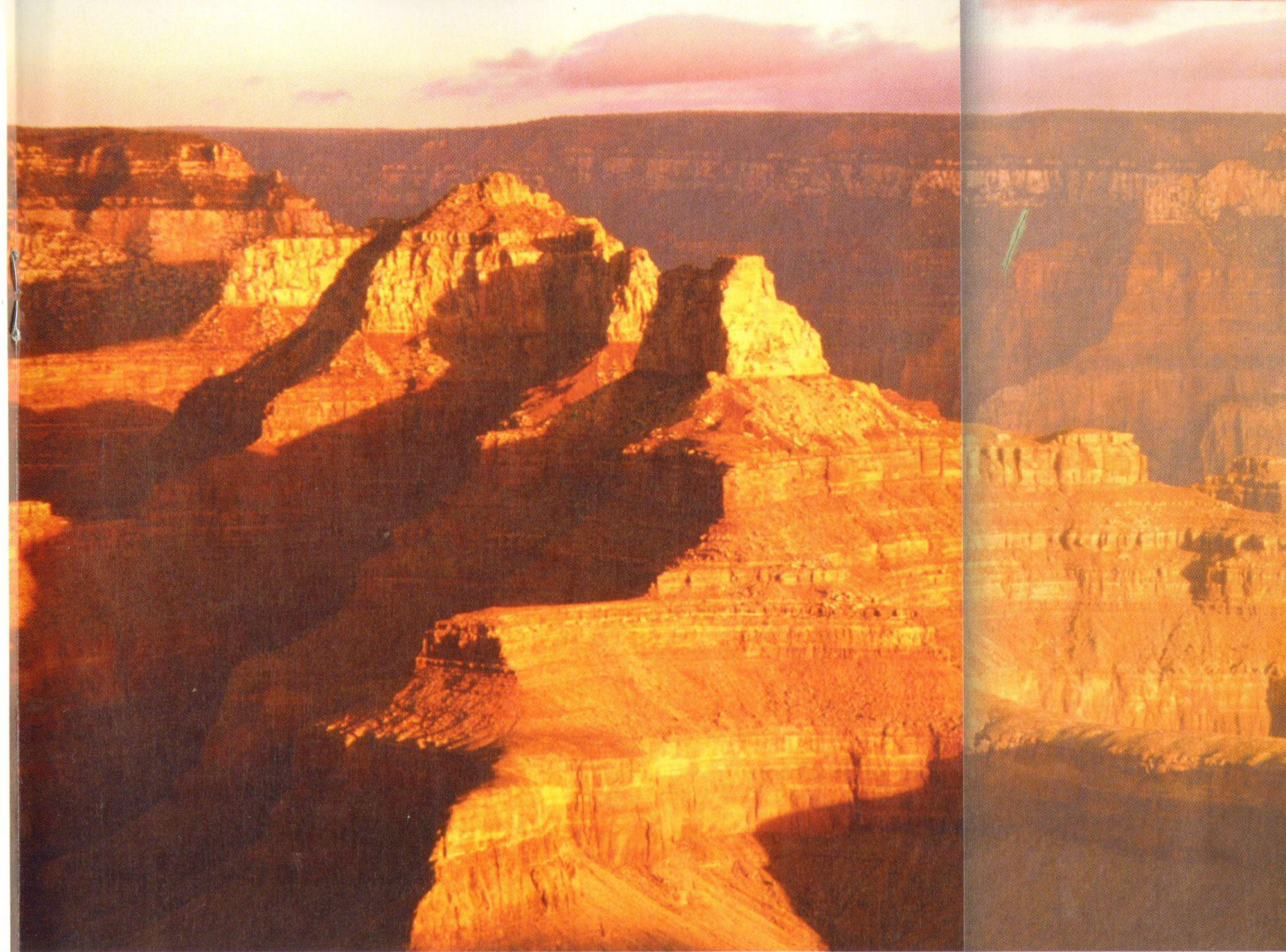
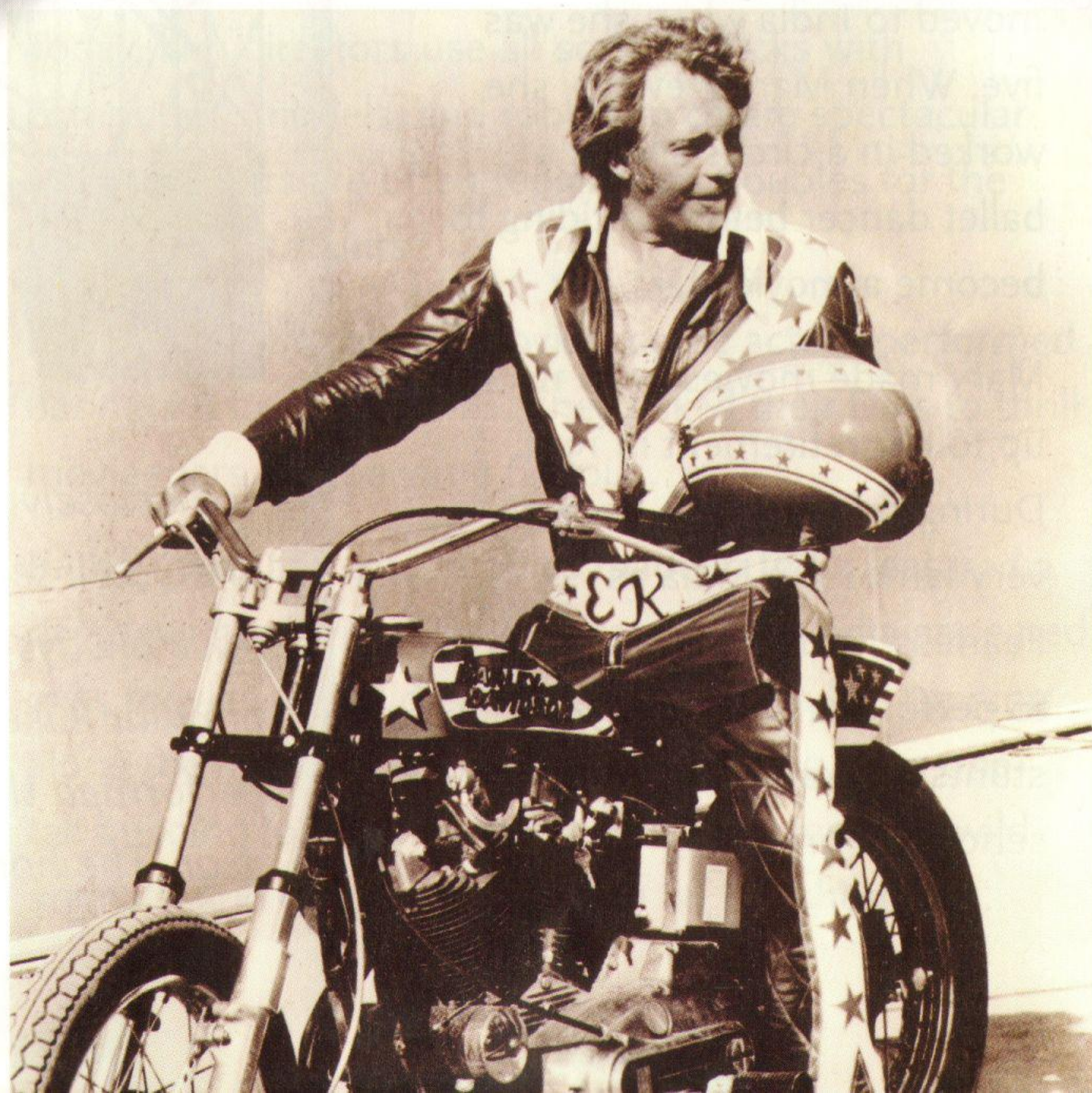
**WHEELS IN THE AIR**  
**Evel Knievel:**  
***Daredevil Supreme***



When he was only eight years old, Evel (whose real name is Robert) saw a daredevil car show and decided that he wanted to be a motorcycle stunt rider when he grew up.

**Daredevil Dreams**

In 1965 Evel Knievel formed a stunt group called *Evel Knievel's Motorcycle Daredevils*. They performed all sorts of spectacular jumps. They jumped through fire and over packs of mountain lions and rattlesnakes.



Evel kept increasing the size of the jumps he made. He bragged that one day he would jump over the Grand Canyon. But when he jumped the fountains at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas, he crash-landed badly and was in the hospital for a month.

In Evel's hometown of Butte, Montana there's an annual celebration called *Evel Knievel Daze*.



## WHEELS IN THE AIR



In 1976, Evel was seriously injured trying to jump over a tank of man-eating sharks in Chicago. He was horrified to learn that a cameraman who was filming the jump was also injured. Evel decided it was time to retire before he performed one stunt too many. He certainly didn't want anyone else to be hurt.

## DARING FACTS

PARIS ● VIENNA



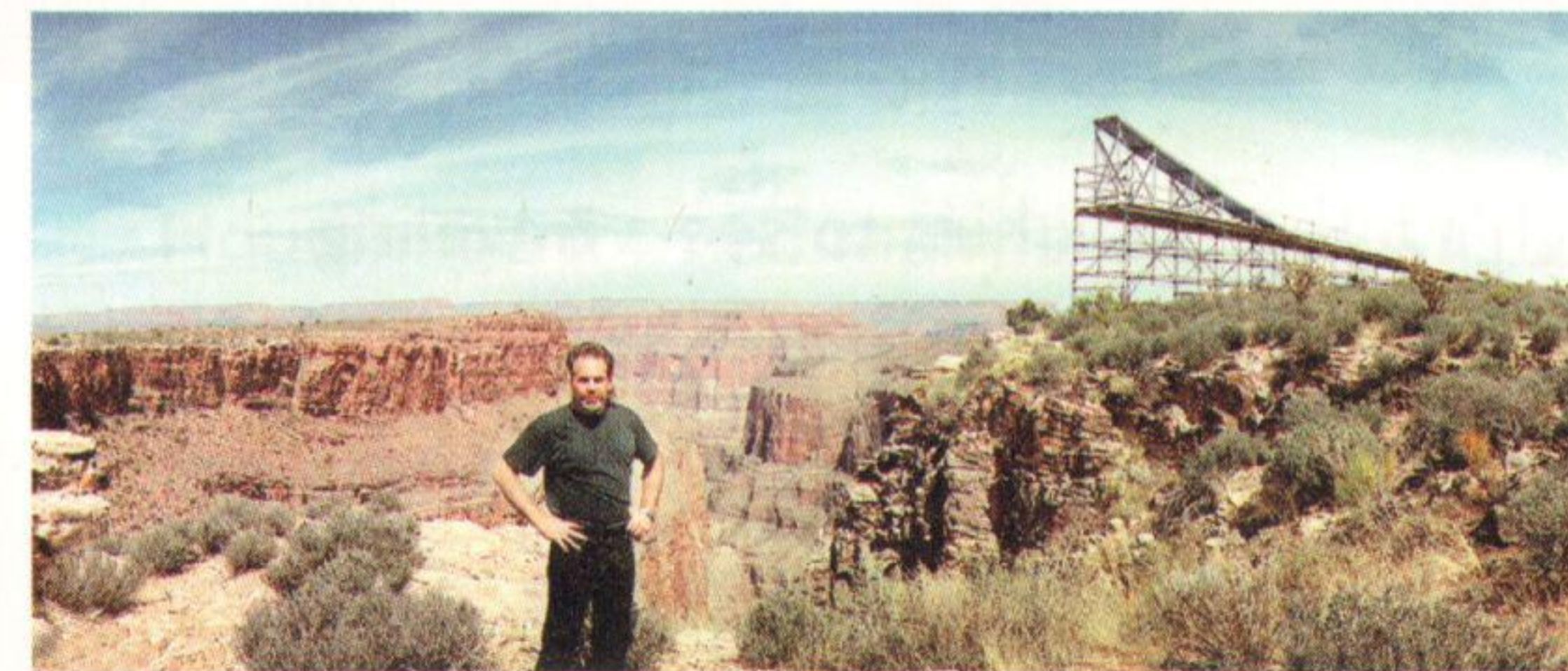
## UPSIDE DOWN

In 1900, Johann Hurlinger walked from Vienna to Paris on his hands. That's a distance of 870 miles (1,400 kilometers)!



## Crash and Burn?

Between 1968 and 1976 Evel performed many jumps over cars and trucks. After jumping over 13 double-decker buses, he crashed and broke his **pelvis**. This injury didn't stop him. Five months later he successfully jumped over 14 Greyhound buses.



Evel's son Robbie (above) followed in his father's tire tracks. In 1999 he jumped over this section of the Grand Canyon on his motorbike.





## Quiz

- 1 After Mabel Stark had been attacked by two tigers it was found that
  - a) the tigers had not been properly trained
  - b) the act was too difficult for them
  - c) they had not been fed for 24 hours
  - d) Mabel had been cruel to them
- 2 Evel Knievel gave up his major performing in 1976 because a bystander was injured in a stunt. **True/False?**
- 3 Indian stuntwoman, *Fearless Nadia*, was actually born in the U.S. **True/False?**
- 4 Phillipe Petit walked a wire between the Twin Towers
  - a) as part of the opening ceremony
  - b) to win a bet
  - c) in order to make lots of money
  - d) because he loves big challenges
- 5 Phillipe Petit carried a baby on his shoulders during one walk. **True/False?**
- 6 Houdini lost his life when
  - a) he drowned in a glass tank of water
  - b) he was punched in the stomach by a fan
  - c) his parachute failed to open in a stunt flight
  - d) he was run over by a car
- 7 Katherine Stinson was pressured into flying by her father. **True/False?**
- 8 Mabel Stark performed with a troupe of tigers because
  - a) her father had left her the tigers when he died
  - b) she could not afford a troupe of lions
  - c) she preferred tigers because of their beauty
  - d) they would never harm her
- 9 Annie Taylor was first to
  - a) train polar bears
  - b) perform her own stunts in movies
  - c) go over Niagara Falls in a barrel
  - d) be sawn in two by Houdini
- 10 Evel Kneivel was never injured in a performance. **True/False?**

## Answers

- 1 c)  
2 True  
3 False  
4 d)  
5 False  
6 b)  
7 False  
8 c)  
9 c)  
10 False

## Glossary

**architect** Someone whose job is to plan and design new buildings and make sure they are built correctly.

**harnesses** Combination of straps and bands used to hold something safely in place.

**illusions** Visual tricks to make something imaginary appear real.

**pelvis** The ring of bone made up of the lower part of your backbone, your two hips, and the cavity it forms.

**straitjackets** Types of coats or jackets for holding down the arms of uncontrollable or violent people.

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## Daredevils and Show-offs

Are you a thrill-seeker?

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tiger?

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