

## PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT



# Sensible Violence

The shooting of Larry Flynt has been referred to as "senseless violence." It kind of makes you wonder exactly what *sensible* violence is. The difference seems to be that senseless violence isn't permitted by law.

Sensible violence allows landlords to ignore peeling paint that, when tasted by curious infants, can result in death by lead poisoning.

Sensible violence enables the liquor lobby to persuade legislators not to pass a bill that would require funds to be allocated for the rehabilitation of motorists arrested for drunken driving.

Sensible violence is getting the highest possible percentage of the population hooked on coffee, and then—because caffeine is naturally bitter—there is mass sugar addiction to boot.

Sensible violence is displayed in that TV commercial in which a famous actress tries to make parents feel guilty for not feeding their kids Twinkies, manufactured by ITT, the same folks who sabotaged the legally elected Allende government in Chile.

Sensible violence is the production and distribution of cigarettes, justified by a printed warning about danger to your health, a warning that has become as meaningless as playing "The Star-Spangled Banner" before a ball game.

Cigarette advertising was banned on radio and television in 1971. According

to *Advertising Age*, the five major tobacco companies spent more than \$62 million on magazine ads the previous year. In the seven years since the ban took effect that figure has surpassed the \$800-million mark.

The American Cancer Society has concluded that since cigarette ads were taken off the air, more than a million and a half smokers in this country have died of diseases related to cigarettes.

It was recently stated in the *Columbia Journalism Review* by Managing Editor R. C. Smith: "A survey of the leading national magazines that might have been expected to report on the subject reveals a striking and disturbing pattern. In magazines that accept cigarette advertising I was unable to find a single article, in seven years of publication, that would have given readers any clear notion of the nature and extent of the medical and social havoc being wreaked by the cigarette-smoking habit. The records of magazines that refuse cigarette ads, or that do not accept advertising at all, were considerably better."

Once I wrote in *National Lampoon*, "Anybody who buys cigarettes because they're advertised here deserves to die of cancer." The *Lampoon* printed my comment, but decided to omit "of cancer."

When Larry Flynt first appointed me Publisher of HUSTLER, he said, "You don't have to accept cigarette ads if you don't want to. Principles have to come

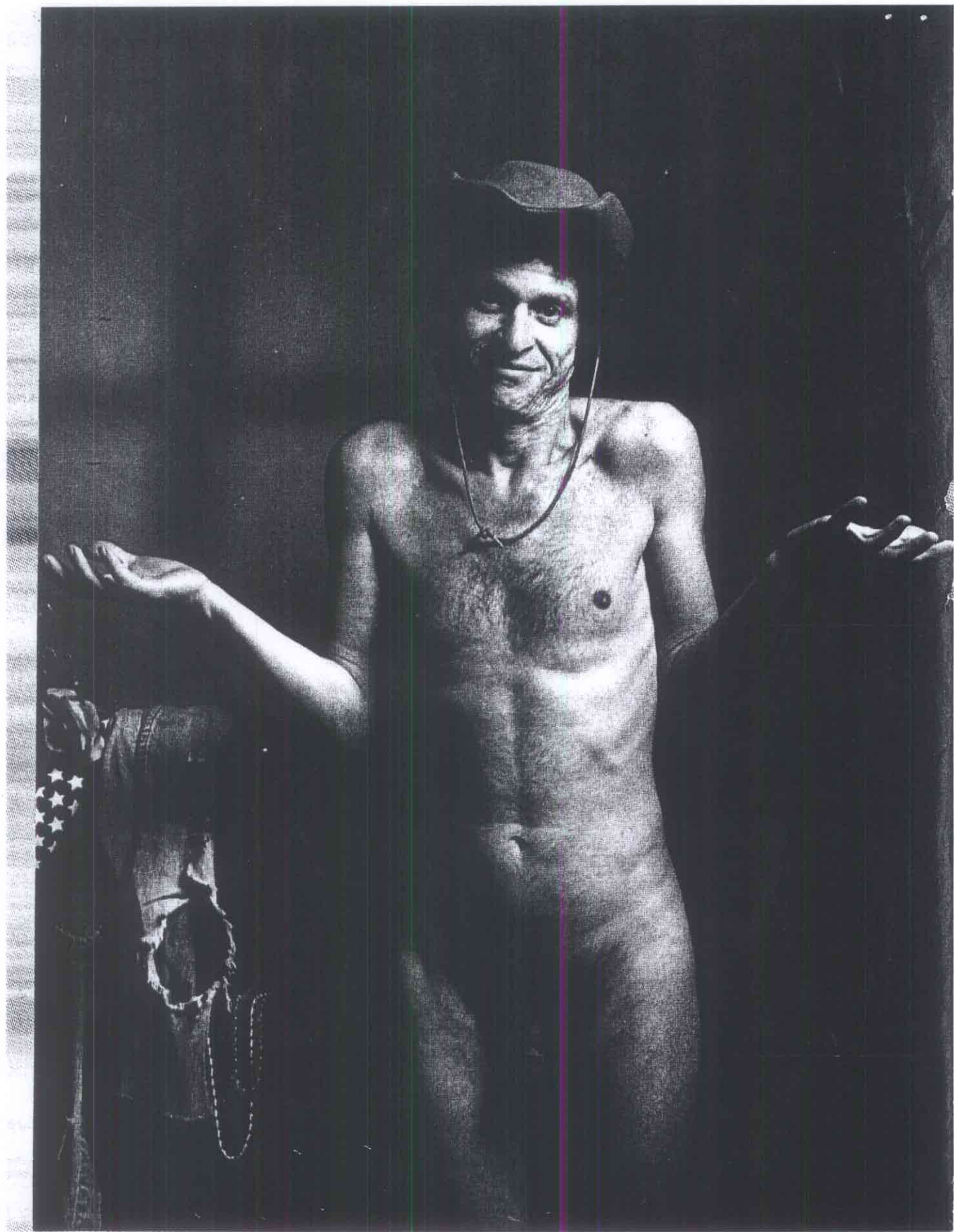
before money." I pointed out that HUSTLER's accepting a cigarette ad would make Larry look like a public hypocrite, since he had already published an antismoking article and those shocking antismoking ads.

He replied that if we were to get any cigarette ads, they would be published only if HUSTLER could continue its antismoking editorial stance. Obviously, we are unlikely to be offered any cigarette advertising under such terms. Well, that's the way the ashes scatter.

There is a terrible irony in all this. American citizens with compassion for others are nevertheless busy working for tobacco companies and gun manufacturers alike. Somehow they are able to separate themselves from the consequences of their labor because they have families to support.

The real struggle is not between capitalism and communism. It is not between Eastern and Western religions. Rather, it is in the effort to find ways of bringing spiritual values into economic systems—as well as into bed—so that people can become more important than products, and every form of violence can be rendered senseless. That is what HUSTLER is really all about. And it's why Larry Flynt sends this bedside message: "I'm coming back stronger than ever, fightin' like a bear."

—Paul Krassner





# INTERVIEW

# PAUL KRASSNER

## The Naked Truth

At the age of six, *HUSTLER* Publisher Paul Krassner found himself onstage at Carnegie Hall with a violin tucked under his chin. Considered to be a child prodigy, he made a conscious decision at that very moment to become a rebel.

As president of his high school's student court, the young rebel made a name for himself by subpoenaing the principal and charging him with conflict of interest: The educator came from a rival school. In 1954, needing to complete only one course to graduate, Krassner dropped out of the City College of New York. A year earlier he had begun his apprenticeship in journalism at *Expose* (renamed *The Independent*), a publication run by Lyle Stuart in New York City. The tabloid covered topics—cancer research, government corruption, monopolies, to name but a few—that 25 years later are still hot items in the media. Eventually, Paul became managing editor of *The Independent*.

Through his association with Lyle Stuart and *The Independent*, Krassner came into contact with sexual-ethics pioneer Albert

Ellis and asked him if he had any unpublished material. Ellis submitted articles on the then-taboo subjects of masturbation and petting; these are part of Ellis's book *Sex Without Guilt* (Lyle Stuart, \$4.95), which Paul calls a "predecessor to the sexual revolution of the '60s." While at *The Independent*, Krassner free-lanced articles for *Mad* magazine and wrote skits for *The Steve Allen Show*. At the same time, he was doing occasional stand-up comedy in the New York area and at colleges around the country.

In 1958, Paul began publishing *The Realist*. For the next 16 years he put out the magazine fairly regularly—in his words, "shocking the shit out of the Establishment and the readership." He managed to subsidize the publication throughout this period by taking on additional assignments: contributing editor to *Playboy*; editor of his friend Lenny Bruce's autobiography, *How to Talk Dirty and Influence People*; film critic for *Cavalier* magazine; co-editor with Ken Kesey of *The Last Supplement to the Whole Earth Catalog*; and columnist for *National*

*Lampoon* and *Crawdaddy*.

Then, in December of last year, Larry Flynt invited Paul to our annual Christmas party and not only named him Publisher of *HUSTLER* but also announced that *The Realist* would resume publication. Even though the news came as a complete surprise—Krassner assumed he was invited to perform a comedy routine—it appears in retrospect to have been inevitable. Like Larry Flynt, Paul comes from a long tradition of iconoclasts and truth-seekers. As he points out, with some tongue in cheek, "When the first so-called leaders of cavemen were writing on cave walls, there was some upstart outside writing something else on the rocks, in opposition to what was officially being written on the cave walls." So it's little wonder that Paul Krassner is now Publisher of *HUSTLER*, the current "opposition stone" in America. Our Editorial Director, Bruce David, questioned Krassner about how he will maintain his iconoclasm at *HUSTLER* (under the stipulation that Paul keep his clothes on during the interview).

**HUSTLER:** For the benefit of our readers who may not be familiar with *The Realist*, could you describe the magazine and explain how it evolved over the years?

**KRASSNER:** *The Realist* was simply a magazine that published stuff no other publication would touch. I was doing stand-up comedy in the early '50s, when Lenny Bruce and Mort Sahl were, but I didn't have the same show-business drive as they did. My bits about music to masturbate by and Senator Joe McCarthy weired out the club owners.

That type of humor and satire made *The Realist*. There were only two humor magazines in this country then: *Mad*, which was aimed at teenagers, and *The New Yorker*, which I was too lazy to read anything in but the cartoons.

**HUSTLER:** In 1958, when you began *The Realist*, you were among a small faction concerned with freedom of the press in America. Wasn't *The Realist* born out of a traditionally liberal sensibility? What some people called the free-thought movement?

**KRASSNER:** Well, I've always felt that freedom of the press is a logical extension of freedom of speech. If you could talk about things in your

living room or bedroom and not have to answer to anyone but yourself, you should be able to do the same in print.

But I learned that there was a lot of compartmentalization among people who called themselves free thinkers. They might think freely about religion but not about sex. There were a lot of prudes in the free-thought movement, just as there are a lot of prudes in the nudist movement. They

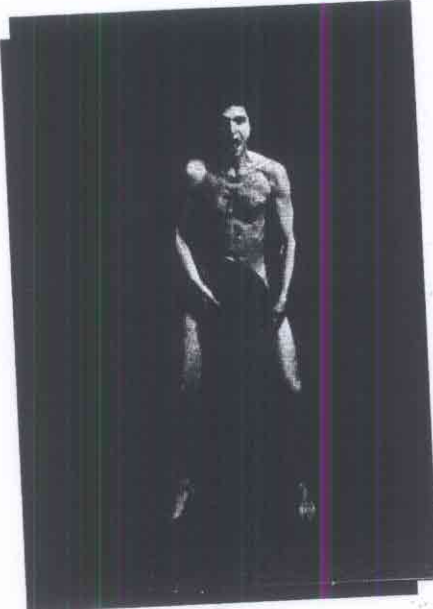
accept the anatomy but not the physiology.

**HUSTLER:** How did the sense of humor and irreverence you introduced to this tradition eliminate that compartmentalization?

**KRASSNER:** By being consistent. If irreverence applied to anything, it would apply to everything. That became a challenge because there are things in which you have a vested interest, and you have to apply irreverence to those things as well.

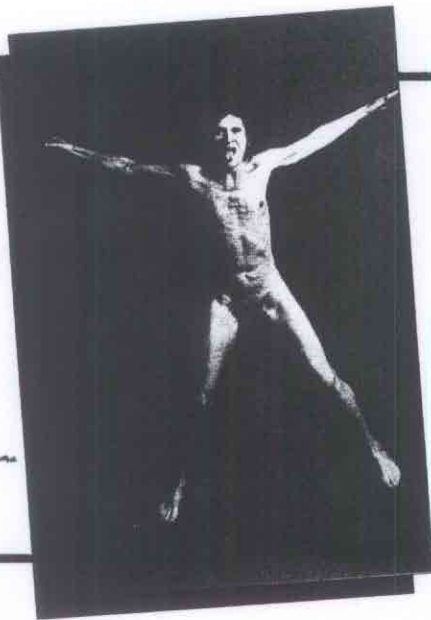
**HUSTLER:** For that time wasn't *The Realist* a radical publication, which caused a great deal of controversy?

**KRASSNER:** Well, people have defenses that are built up from early childhood, and if you present an idea to them in a way that makes them laugh, quite often those defenses are dropped. Suddenly, they may discover



Photography by Frank DeLia





they're holding onto a truth that's too hot to handle, and they get offended.

**HUSTLER:** Can you cite some of the subject matter in *The Realist* that has caused controversy? And what were the repercussions?

**KRASSNER:** In the late '50s I once needed a note from my attorney explaining to the printer that it was OK to print the words *shit* and *fuck* in an interview with Albert Ellis on the semantics of profanity. But in 1967 the shit really hit the fan when I published an issue containing "The Parts Left Out of the Kennedy Book."

William Manchester's book *The Death of a President* was about to be published, and Jackie Kennedy was trying to have certain information omitted. Everyone was wondering, "What could there possibly be that she didn't want printed?" So I tried to get hold of the parts of the text she wanted cut, but when I was unable to, I decided I'd write them myself. I didn't make a conscious decision to shock people; it just came about organically.

The account started off with a totally true premise, and step by step—as if you were peeling off layers of an onion to get to the core—led logically and dramatically to the climax. Jackie Kennedy confessed that on Air Force One, flying John Kennedy's body from Dallas to Washington, she had discovered Lyndon Johnson crouching over Kennedy's corpse. In her own words (or my version of her own words) she said: "There is only one way to say this—he was literally fucking my husband in the throat. In the wound in the front of his throat."

I also included commentary attributed to handwritten marginal notes from Manchester's publisher to check with a Warren Commission member. He

questioned whether this was just an ordinary act of necrophilia, or if LBJ was trying to change the front entry wound into an exit wound in order to fool the Warren Commission. Ironically, that aspect of the wound is still a matter of controversy now.

**HUSTLER:** You must have encountered a lot of resistance from the Establishment in the '50s and '60s, particularly over something like that.

**KRASSNER:** I've already mentioned the trouble we had with the printer over the Ellis interview. When I was ready to publish the issue containing "The Parts Left Out of the Kennedy Book," he refused to print it. I couldn't find anyone to do the job, not even the people who printed the Communist Party's newspaper, the *Daily Worker*. Even they wanted to maintain their respectability. (That issue also featured the "Disneyland Memorial Orgy" centerspread, which included Goofy fucking Minnie Mouse on a cash register.)

When the issue finally was printed, a great deal of controversy ensued. The people who recognized that I had made up the material were upset that I had presented it as truth. The people who believed it were upset over its tastelessness. (The late Merriman Smith, a syndicated UPI columnist, actually wrote a column to assure the American public that their presidents don't behave that way.) And even the intelligence community was upset.

**HUSTLER:** Why was that?

**KRASSNER:** First of all, people in high levels of the intelligence community know that stuff as bizarre as what I'd written about goes on all the time. They didn't question the veracity of my report; instead, they wanted to know how I found out something they couldn't

admit they were unaware of, because that would be bad for their image. So they scrambled around looking for the leak who fed me information.

**HUSTLER:** Was there any organized attempt by the government, through the FBI or a similar group, to put *The Realist* out of business?

**KRASSNER:** As I've said, there were some problems with the printers, and some complaints—made by people who thought *The Realist* was obscene—that the police or local authorities would investigate.

But it wasn't until I got politically active and helped organize the Yippies and spoke out against the war in Vietnam that I became the target of an organized attack by the government.

I was beginning to surface from the so-called underground, and *Life* magazine wrote a favorable profile of me in 1968. The FBI's New York office asked the bureau's headquarters in Washington for authorization to send *Life* a fake letter calling *The Realist* "blatant obscenity"—which was not true—and calling me "a raving, unconfined nut"—which *was* true.

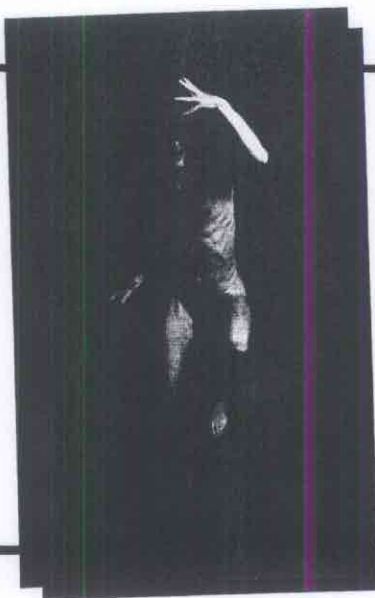
Apparently, publishing stuff for what they thought was a limited audience was one thing, but to help organize the masses in protest over the Vietnam War was something else again.

**HUSTLER:** Once again, do you see a parallel here between HUSTLER and *The Realist*?

**KRASSNER:** Yes, there is a connection. That fake letter—signed by "Harold Rasmussen, Brooklyn College School of General Studies"—used "obscenity" as a smoke screen to attack my political activity. I think this is true in Larry Flynt's case too.

**HUSTLER:** So you feel HUSTLER is





really a political magazine?

**KRASSNER:** Definitely. Even without the sexual content the magazine is highly political. But because of the sex it's explosive. Sexual expression is the most basic form of individual freedom. If a culture can repress sexuality, it can easily control its citizens in other ways.

**HUSTLER:** Conversely, if people can liberate themselves sexually, they can liberate themselves in other ways as well. Do you feel that religion in America today is still used as a tool to perpetuate sexual repression and repressive control of society in general?

**KRASSNER:** That's an original function of organized religion: to control sexuality. Of course, religion, too, has to change with the times. So it was no surprise to hear the Pope come out and say, "OK, well, since you *have* to get divorced, you won't get excommunicated." I imagine that someday the Pope might be forced into endorsing birth control by artificial means, and the Church will rationalize it by presenting some type of theological justification. They'll say if God didn't want diaphragms to exist, She wouldn't have invented rubber trees.

**HUSTLER:** How pervasive is the type of sexual repression directly traceable to the influence of organized religion?

**HUSTLER:** Everybody I've talked with who had a strong religious upbringing—without exception—has claimed it fucked them up sexually. And they've had to go through a lot of changes to overcome the fear, guilt and shame about sex instilled in them by that religious training.

**HUSTLER:** Aside from the obvious problem of sexual dysfunction, how do fear, guilt and shame about sex manifest themselves in a broader sense?

**KRASSNER:** By being channeled into areas that perpetuate the power of the Establishment; so that the soft-core pornography now being used in advertising exploits and diverts the natural divine sexual energy into buying deodorants for every possible orifice. And that same sexual energy has been diverted into obedience in the military and society at large.

The most basic element in all existence is the life force, the perpetuation of the species. If you can control that force, you can control society—and the people who control that drive according to a society's arbitrary rules are usually convinced they are noble people. Hitler thought he was a very noble individual trying to spread his vision of nobility to the world. But I believe if there had been a free press in Nazi Germany, the Holocaust might have been averted.

**HUSTLER:** Then, by imparting information that reveals the kind of hypocrisy and manipulation the Establishment uses to control the people, doesn't it follow that **HUSTLER** and Larry Flynt have become a very threatening element to the game the Establishment is playing? Isn't it in the Establishment's interest to eliminate such a threat?

**KRASSNER:** Sure. And claiming that the magazine's sexual content is pornographic is a convenient smoke screen to attack what constitutes a political threat.

There is a large group of people in this country who have been ignored and betrayed by their own representatives in the political system. **HUSTLER** Magazine reaches those people and represents their interests. We can show them the hypocrisy in our culture—including their own—because we don't

have to answer to anyone but ourselves.

**HUSTLER:** Events that are happening in the world and the information about them reported through the established media like the *New York Times*, the major networks, *Time* and the rest are often two distinctly different things. Is there any question in your mind that there is a concerted effort by the government to control and manipulate information put before the public?

**KRASSNER:** None. It's like inhaling and exhaling. If you do dirty shit, then you've got to cover it up.

The birth of the so-called underground press was related to this. As more and more people got involved in being on the street and *participating* in the news instead of just watching it, they saw a wide disparity between what they experienced and the way it was reported. As a result, papers like the *Berkeley Barb* and the *Los Angeles Free Press* started happening everywhere. Once you find out that contemporary history is a lie, it raises the possibility that maybe *all* history is a lie.

**HUSTLER:** But **HUSTLER** is a national glossy magazine and possibly the first magazine of its size to say to a large cross section of what was once called the Silent Majority: "America is lying to you."

**KRASSNER:** I think **HUSTLER** is part of what could be called a growing anti-Establishment empire. When we were younger, there were magazines like *Life*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, *Look*—you could name a half-dozen more—that people thought were as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar and would go on forever. Those empires have fallen, and new publications have grown in their place. **HUSTLER** is the key pub-

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lication in this particular anti-Establishment empire.

**HUSTLER:** Paul, how dangerous is HUSTLER to the Establishment?

**KRASSNER:** It's hard to say how dangerous it is, but the truth is always dangerous to those who want to hide it. But if it should come out (as I believe it will) that whoever shot Larry in Georgia did it as a hit man for that unholy trinity of government intelligence, corporate immorality and organized crime, then the danger that HUSTLER represents to the Establishment must be very great. Of course, the media will be telling America that Larry was shot because of the pornography in the magazine.

**HUSTLER:** And they'll certainly try to defuse any presentation of the shooting as a political act. But at this point we know one thing: That whether or not it was a planned, organized assassination attempt, it reveals at the very least the existence of organized repression. It illuminates a mind-set shared by the repressive elements in the Establishment and those people who are so afraid of the truth that they co-opt their own freedom and encourage repression.

**KRASSNER:** Of course. Let's assume that it was a lone, antiporn nut. The legal maneuver of prosecuting Larry for

obscenity would have been encouragement for that individual to strike out against his own fears.

**HUSTLER:** The court action, then, could have provided sanction, and the indictment and trial were orchestrated by the repressive Establishment?

**KRASSNER:** Right. And this type of thing takes on other forms. When I was investigating the Manson case, an L.A. Sheriff's deputy said that he and his fellow officers had been told by their superiors to leave Manson alone—this was prior to the Tate/LaBianca murders. The deputy told me they had said something big was going to happen. I asked him what they said it would be, and he said he never questioned his superiors. But when I asked him what the deputies had speculated, he said they thought that Manson and his group were going to kill Black Panthers.

In effect, the racism of the L.A. Sheriff's Department gave sanction to the so-called Manson family, allowing it the freedom to carry out its mission... which in the end proved to be the murders of Sharon Tate and others, not the slaughter of Black Panthers. If you're allowed to get away with parole violations as Manson had been—rape, forgery, violation of the Mann Act, grand-theft auto—you may not know you're acting as an agent for the government. A prisonmate of Manson wrote

me, saying, "Me and Charlie are still trying to figure out how long our leashes are and who's been pissin' on 'em." Which is a poetic way of saying that if you're given sanction, you just don't ask questions.

This same principle applies to Kent State. An FBI informant named Terry Norman may have fired the first shot, which caused the National Guard to open fire on the students demonstrating against the war. His action gave sanction to the guardsmen.

The point is that by providing sanction the government becomes a collaborator in the crime.

**HUSTLER:** There is an attempt to reopen the Kent State investigation, but it appears that the officials are dragging their heels again.

**KRASSNER:** And the irony here is that it may be because of blackmail. There's a book called *A Sexual Profile of Men in Power*, in which the authors talk about the kinky activities of a great percentage of public officials; it's almost as if, in order to compensate for their guilt at passing inhumane laws and regulating the enforcement of them, they have to compensate by being stomped on by some woman wearing high heels and then paying for it because their wives wouldn't do it. This is why it was particularly interesting to me that CHIC published a piece on Senator Hayakawa, which gives documentation of his being into bondage, because he has come out against pornography. He has also complained—I even worked it into my comedy act—that we were giving too many advantages to Russia in the arms race. I imagined him saying this line: "You can have the neutron bomb—I just want to keep my whips."

**HUSTLER:** How does this relate to the Kent State issue?

**KRASSNER:** Because we don't know how those officials are being blackmailed. The ones holding back the investigations.

**HUSTLER:** Right. We do know that James Rhodes was governor of Ohio during the Kent State killings, and was out of office awhile and is now back in, and he's the same man who was running the state at the time when the new investigations were killed.

**KRASSNER:** Yeah. I don't know if Governor Rhodes likes to spread chunky peanut butter on hookers, but I just somehow assume he has something to hide. I mean, look at G. Harrold Carswell—this is the man Richard Nixon wanted to appoint to the Supreme Court. A while back he was arrested for propositioning a cop in a men's room. With the data banks they have, one

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could suspect they knew about that and would have something over him as a Supreme Court justice. And the irony would have been, had he been appointed to the Court, how he would have decided on the constitutionality of entrapment of homosexuals—which is exactly what happened to him; he was entrapped. So it can go all the way up to that level.

**HUSTLER:** So, on a very real level, sexual liberation—especially in Congress, in the political machine itself—is a guarantee of freedom on many other levels. And what you're getting into now is even more immediate, because what we're saying here is that sexual reality for all of us, and most particularly and crucially for politicians, is quite different from what *Time* and *Newsweek* would have you believe.

**KRASSNER:** Sure. Because *Time* and *Newsweek* get a lot of leaks from those people. It's like a local reporter who's working the police beat; he won't do an anticop story because he doesn't want to ruin his sources. So they go in tandem.

**HUSTLER:** We learned in Elizabeth Ray's case that sex on Capitol Hill is far more prevalent and far more kinky than our outstanding legislators would have the American public believe. We also

learned that some of the same people who tend to be righteous, and who would enact antiporn laws and antisex laws, are themselves guilty of enjoying or living a hypocritical sexual existence.

**KRASSNER:** Right. And with all the various means of wiretapping and spying we know are applied there, it probably means that a lot of this is known, so there's a kind of unspoken blackmail that runs the government. J. Edgar Hoover would go up to a senator and say, "I just want you to know, we have this information about you that has been given to us. Somebody took films of you Scotch-taping your secretary—who can't type—to the wall. But I just want you to know that this is safe with us." Then if Hoover wanted to strengthen the FBI or to extend its power, these guys were going to vote for it. Nothing was ever said about "Hey, we're going to blackmail you," but these people knew that he knew and had the evidence.

**HUSTLER:** This type of blackmail, it would seem, is the key to suppressing information.

**KRASSNER:** Yes, but once you have enough information and are sexually liberated, a law of physics applies. Heated molecules stir each other up. If you develop a healthy skepticism in one area, it can very easily lead to skepticism in other areas.

**HUSTLER:** Would you consider Lee

Harvey Oswald a dupe like Manson or was he silenced because he knew too much?

**KRASSNER:** Well, if he had been a lone-nut assassin, you'd think that when he was caught he would have said, "I did it and I'm proud." But he didn't say that. He had been encouraged to act out certain things by certain people who didn't think he'd pull on his leash. He had to be killed by Jack Ruby after he said, "I'm just a patsy—I didn't kill anyone," because he realized he had been set up, and he probably would have spilled the beans.

**HUSTLER:** Do you think Larry Flynt's ongoing investigation to get to the bottom of the Kennedy assassination had anything to do with what happened to him in Georgia?

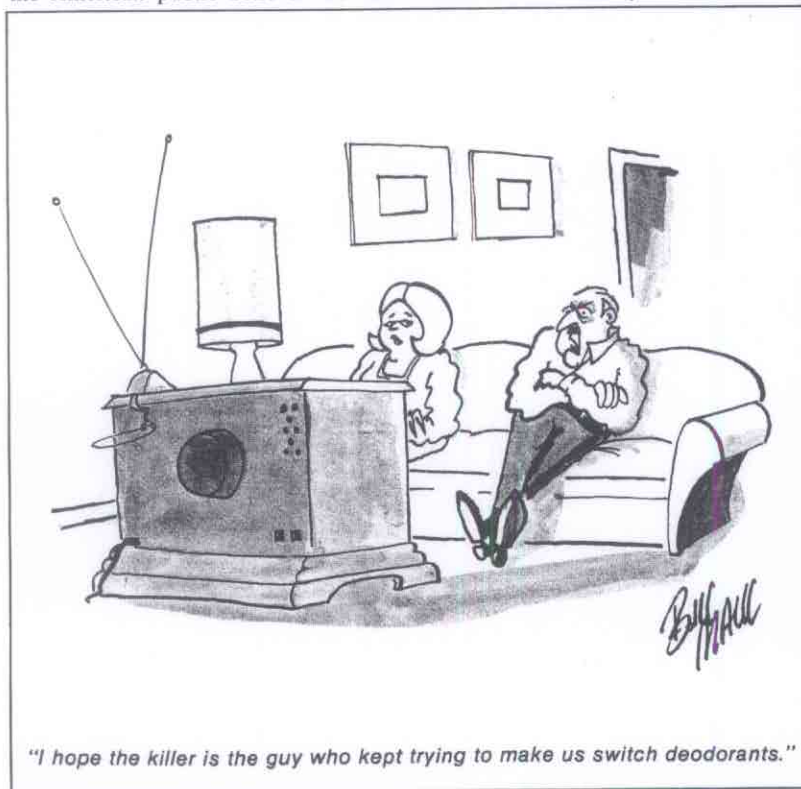
**KRASSNER:** That's what I believe. It's interesting to note that William Sullivan was Hoover's assistant director and approved that poison-pen letter about me sent to *Life*. He was killed when a hunter supposedly mistook him for a deer, shortly after the retired lawman accused the FBI of using illegal methods to track down members of the Weather Underground in the early '70s. (Perhaps it's just a coincidence, but it may have been a .44-caliber deer rifle that was used to shoot Larry.)

**HUSTLER:** We have a history of that sort of thing. While the established press still scoffs at conspiracy theories surrounding the assassinations of JFK, RFK, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr., all reason points to a conspiracy for such a massive, far-reaching series of events to occur within ten years. Particularly considering that all the witnesses or anyone close to the cases were killed or disappeared before they could reveal any information.

This brings me to an important question: How free would you say America is today?

**KRASSNER:** It's in a state of transition. It's almost as if it could go either way: toward a liberated society or toward a police state. The thing is, if unemployment keeps increasing, for example, cops won't think of a police state as a horror. They'll think of it in terms of jobs.

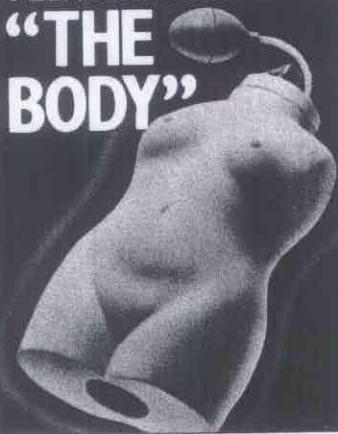
The government deliberately wants there to be an element of stress in simple survival so that people are concerned with how they're going to get the rent money or pay the food bill. The government does that because of the insane priority it places on keeping the world armed for overkill rather than putting that money into humanistic programs—and that's what the American Revolution was about: taxation without representation. So the government depends



"I hope the killer is the guy who kept trying to make us switch deodorants."



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on people keeping so busy dealing with their own survival that they'll just let whatever truth comes out pass by. Former CIA Director Allen W. Dulles stated at a Warren Commission hearing that the American public would never read all the commission's material.

**HUSTLER:** Why was the government frightened during the '60s?

**KRASSNER:** The '60s was a sudden evolutionary break—young people from all walks of life began to be in touch with themselves and to trust their friends more than the government. These people began to realize that life should be for pleasure, rather than for spreading pain. As a result, they helped bring about a change in the nature of sexuality. Cooperating became more important than competing. They grew their own food, didn't eat meat, made their own clothes, took care of each other so that they didn't have to buy insurance policies; and they shared appliances and automobiles, while building up an extended family. This was good for children, too, because they could learn from a lot of adults and a lot of other kids instead of being limited to just Mom and Dad, Spot the dog, and one-and-a-half siblings.

**HUSTLER:** What happened to the momentum of the '60s?

**KRASSNER:** Some of us who were like a new wave back in the '60s are riding the crest now. For a few years I lived by the ocean. I used to just sit and watch, and came to realize that if *everybody* were on the crest, there would be no waves. The difference between us and a lot of previous generations is that built into our belief system is the notion of change. It's important to us to understand what the current waves are instead of trying to repress them.

I think that on several levels the '60s consciousness is being recycled, coming out as "It's our turn now!"

**HUSTLER:** The awful thing is that so many Americans are emotionally in debt because they've had feelings beaten out of them by our culture. The key factor, of course, is that they were taught to deny their own sexuality.

**KRASSNER:** The very first thing an unhealthy culture teaches a kid is for that kid to separate flesh and spirit. A child is an experimenter, a curious Martian. A child is a little Martian who discovers its nose, ears and toes, but when it discovers what's between its legs, its hands are slapped or it gets diverted. Kids may not have the vocabulary to ask "Why do they always turn the TV on when I start playing with myself?" But they do learn

that kind of behavior modification even before they learn language. And the legacy of the '60s, which is now blossoming in the '70s, is an increase in our awareness that even if we recognize that masses of people are asleep, the way they are awakened is not by playing God with the lives of others.

**HUSTLER:** As an atheist, how do you interpret Larry's being born again?

**KRASSNER:** There's no conflict, because as an atheist—especially an atheist who, just for the sake of absurdity, has tried to think of the concept of God every moment of the day—I've probably had a more intimate relationship with this mystery than many people who profess to be believers. I've seen people insisting that they knew more about the way the universe works than I did. But the idea of endless time and endless space was inconceivable to me. I mean I couldn't even figure out why people didn't fall off Florida.

So I listened to people talk about religion and God, and I realized that whatever they did, however they behaved, was based on their version of God. And I began to see the people in the world as various manifestations of God: Cruel people thought of a vengeful God, while compassionate people thought of an understanding God. Some people acted as if *they* were God; everybody was playing God with everybody else in all kinds of subtle ways. Parents played it with their kids, and husbands and wives played it with one another.

**HUSTLER:** And Larry Flynt?

**KRASSNER:** I see that Larry's behavior is rooted in the way in which he believes in God. If I could pinpoint when I decided to accept Larry's appointment as Publisher of *HUSTLER*, I would say it occurred when he was saying that Christ was not a better teacher than Buddha and that neither Christ nor Buddha was better than any individual, but rather that God was within every individual. As long as Larry was born again to that kind of freedom, I felt we were on the same wavelength. As opposed to the *Christian Yellow Pages*, in which so-called Christians advertise, in order to buy from and sell to other Christians exclusively. That smacks of a kind of anti-Semitism in disguise.

**HUSTLER:** There are many people who think in traditional Christian terms, which are the terms of sexual repression. So we should clarify right off that Larry has not been tripped up on the traditional, organized religious theology. Can you explain for the benefit of our readers who are now seeing the new, born-again *HUSTLER* for the first time, how Larry's experience manifested itself

(continued on page 110)



## INTERVIEW: PAUL KRASSNER

(continued from page 104)

to him and how that is reflected in the magazine?

KRASSNER: Well, since my own religion is the First Amendment, which includes both freedom of religion and freedom of speech and the press, I see Larry as the missing link between those components of the First Amendment. Freedom of the press, like a branch on a tree, has its own twigs, which include freedom to print sexual and visual material. This is why he and I agree on the logic of running stories from the Bible with appropriate photography illustrating the stories. The erotic paintings in this issue are a good example of the connection between being born

again and recapturing the innocence of sexuality.

HUSTLER: It seems Larry has brought back a healthy form of religion, a non-repressed form that includes elements of Eastern and Western religions, reconstituted in popular terms. Would you say that, in essence, he gives us a healthy religious and spiritual alternative to Establishment religion?

KRASSNER: Exactly. As I've said, the first thing that an unhealthy society teaches a child is to separate the flesh and the spirit. When a child starts out the process of learning with a healthy curiosity, it doesn't separate work and play. Suddenly, distinctions are made and soon there's missing a certain harmony of flesh and spirit. So what Larry represents to me is a missing link between freedom of speech, press and religion. He is able, through HUSTLER, to try to harmonize those elements of spirit and flesh that society has tried to teach us to separate.

HUSTLER: How does this translate into HUSTLER?

KRASSNER: If people are offended, if they were to say that the stories of Lot and his daughters or of Jesus and the Adulteress are obscene, then they're saying that the Bible is obscene. If they're saying that the Bible is *not* obscene because it's written with a lot of "begats," then they're saying that although the Bible doesn't make you horny, a visual pictorial illustration of the Bible *would*. And that type of logic goes against the whole chronology of communication. Pictures came before words.

HUSTLER: In other words, pictures render concepts more immediate?

KRASSNER: Agreed. But there are people who can read the Bible, or look at erotic photography of biblical stories, and view and appreciate them as literature or art and not be turned on sexually.

HUSTLER: Wouldn't the perfect person, the ideal person, respond to them on both levels and not experience the dichotomy?

KRASSNER: When I meet the ideal person, I'll let you know.

HUSTLER: In one's mind then?

KRASSNER: No. It's fascism to decide what somebody else should be turned on by.

HUSTLER: Then are you turned on by the photography in HUSTLER?

KRASSNER: Sure, although less now that I am surrounded by it.

HUSTLER: Have you ever jerked off to copies of HUSTLER or *Playboy* or *Penthouse*?

KRASSNER: All of them. Sometimes I would pile them up, stacking *Playboy*

first, then *Penthouse* and then HUSTLER, so that the flowers would open wider as I went from one magazine to the next. HUSTLER: And have you noticed that if you squint your eyes in a certain way, the photographs become somewhat three-dimensional?

KRASSNER: Well, I would have noticed it, but jerking off has made me blind. What I do notice, however, is that every time I jerk off it's a mixed blessing, because I enjoy it and yet I know something's missing.

HUSTLER: It's the human contact. The human sharing.

KRASSNER: Yeah, right. And that problem is especially acute for prisoners who are denied human contact.

HUSTLER: What you're saying is that visual material often provides a link to reality for people who have been repressed?

KRASSNER: Fantasy is a link.

HUSTLER: The big question in the minds of many HUSTLER readers is: How real is Larry's conversion?

KRASSNER: I fasted for four days before I came to the HUSTLER Christmas party in Columbus, where I met Larry for the first time. We'd had contact through phone calls and correspondence and had watched each other's work. But I didn't really know him, and I wanted to be clearheaded, so after four days of fasting I could watch him very closely. If he was faking something, he was doing such a good job that he was even fooling himself. He said to all of the employees present, "You are what you think you are." When it was my turn to talk—after Larry and Dick Gregory had spoken—I requoted Larry's line and followed with "You are what you pretend to be." He laughed along with everybody else. As long as there was that kind of trust, I felt comfortable.

Later I told Larry I had fasted for those four days before I met him, and he said, "Why did you fast?" I replied, "I didn't want to have any ulterior motives, such as hunger. I also wanted to see if you're a con artist, and you are and you're good." And he smiled and said, "I'm the best." And that was a moment of intimacy because we each trusted one another enough that we were willing to risk being misunderstood. Ultimately, no one except Larry knows the reality of his born-again experience.

HUSTLER: Would you consider yourself born again?

KRASSNER: In my case I'm imprinted on just existence itself—the absurd mystery of my existence and not anyone else's. Not on Scientology's game plan, not on Werner Erhard's est game plan. Everybody tries to get you into their game without even recognizing it some-

# HUSTLER

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (include area code) \_\_\_\_\_

Photographer \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies \_\_\_\_\_

Sexual Fantasies \_\_\_\_\_

Include separate sheet if necessary

Send prize to: ☐ Model ☐ Other

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times. If you had been able to keep the innocence of a newborn baby, you could see people asserting their will on each other all the time, rather than just taking care of their own shit.

Actually, I woke up at the age of six on the stage of Carnegie Hall. I didn't know how I got there, but I knew it was weird. It was as if I were separate and could see this as an objective picture, watching myself and being a member of the audience at the same time. And I realized that everybody in the audience, however they perceived me, did so through their own experience: their fears, their hang-ups, their preconceptions. However much I had been asleep those preceding six years while I became this child violinist prodigy—I had probably been given the violin to keep me from playing with myself—it was such a sudden flash of awareness that I knew I wanted to go there again. So I just paid close attention and watched and saw what would bring on that kind of feeling again.

**HUSTLER:** You were awake and really tuned in.

**KRASSNER:** Exactly. Knowing what was happening and enjoying it.

**HUSTLER:** A large part of awareness is being able to rise above your own preconceptions, fears and hang-ups. When you open up to the spiritual side, or get tuned in, you can step away and observe yourself. Is that correct?

**KRASSNER:** Yes, you can look at yourself as if you were a Martian and an Earthling simultaneously. You can be a Martian like a newborn child and watch the actions of this Earthling whose body you, as a Martian, have inhabited. Suddenly, you see the ridiculous things that you say and the asshole things you do, and how you can decide whether you want to forgive yourself for them or blame yourself for them. I mean, you can see how the Earthling tries to take over the Martian.

**HUSTLER:** Being tuned into this mystery of existence is the same as being in tune to the spirit or God-force, isn't it?

**KRASSNER:** I never told you this, but on the flight to Columbus I kept making a list of editorial ideas for HUSTLER, and I asked myself, "What am I doing this for? I'm only going to a Christmas party!" But it was a form of clairvoyance, I guess.

**HUSTLER:** You apparently believe in clairvoyance, ESP, parapsychological phenomena. Is that correct?

**KRASSNER:** Coincidence was always my religion; and then for a while conspiracy became my religion, and lately I've tried magic on for size. Everybody has different visions of magic.

**HUSTLER:** Religion is another form of

magic, wouldn't you say?

**KRASSNER:** Religion is socially acceptable magic. By magic I mean just the mystery of my ending up at HUSTLER's Christmas party; but there was also a logic to it. And just as I would like to unite flesh and spirit, I would like to harmonize logic and magic into the same process.

**HUSTLER:** Part of Larry's born-again experience is to, effective with this issue, drop all single-girl sets, girl photos, girl fantasies. He's apologized to the women of America for depicting them as sex objects, and so one of the things the new HUSTLER will do is not depict women as sex objects; rather, it will deal with sex as a more complete package featuring men and women together, trying to represent a wholesome sexuality. But was HUSTLER wrong for having had women pose in a provocative way intended presumably to stimulate men? Was there anything evil or sinful about that? Did it foster or continue a problem in society?

**KRASSNER:** Well, I once wrote a story called "Tongue Fu," in which a character has a 15-inch tongue. He is very popular with the women. His father, Luke Warm Sake, tells him that exploitation and liberation are two sides of the same coin. To answer your question, I don't think it's either/or. I think that the girlie pictures are elements of both exploitation and liberation.

**HUSTLER:** Do you feel comfortable with the exclusion of such material?

**KRASSNER:** Well, when I accepted Larry's sudden announcement of my appointment at the Christmas party, I said I was more offended by cigarette ads than by pink cunts, that one gives death and the other life, and although I didn't even know about the real specifics of the changes in HUSTLER at that point, I knew I should have the right to publish that stuff even though people found it offensive.

**HUSTLER:** For the benefit of our readers who are getting from this issue a hint of where we are, what is the future direction of HUSTLER? What are you doing, and what sorts of things will HUSTLER embody?

**KRASSNER:** Well, I like to surprise myself and then share the surprise with a lot of people. So it's hard to say, because to a certain degree we reflect the culture, and to a certain degree we help shape it. If I were truly clairvoyant, I could tell you. But the general direction now—whether you accept the standards of Christianity or of humanism—is intended to show that there are different elements of trying to live a moral life. The fact that Larry has not said his way is *the way*, to me is the most



Christian way to act. So, therefore, I don't see any conflict between my humanism and his born-again Christianity. The standards are the same: compassion, justice, freedom. . . .

**HUSTLER:** And that will be reflected in HUSTLER?

**KRASSNER:** Yeah. So there can be an investigative report on some aspect of society, some organization or individual, let's say, pretending to be one thing and really being another. The right to publish a piece of investigative journalism is not separate from the right to publish, as we do in this issue, a piece about the fear of farting, which is part of our humanity.

I remember when I first began hanging around with Lenny Bruce. He would just fart openly and, as a defense, I'd make some joke about it. At one point he finally called me on it and pointed out how I responded defensively to his freedom or to his lack of fear of farting. **HUSTLER:** So what we're really talking about is a magazine that's encouraging openness on all levels, where we can confront our inhibitions and taboos and at the same time advance ourselves, use communication and print to advance ourselves and complete ourselves as individuals?


**KRASSNER:** And you can extend that to include *nation*. There was a time when HUSTLER was the fart of the media

world, and there was a time when I was embarrassed by it. I didn't jerk off to some of the gratuitous violence or shit cartoons. And there was a time I would have been too embarrassed to be associated with it, but now I'm proud. For the first month I was here I was defensive to people about HUSTLER, and suddenly I saw the level of snobbery in people toward it. These were people who were liberals and radicals, but they didn't want to have anything to do with the people they wanted to liberate. Well, the pass-on readership of HUSTLER is 10 million, and I wouldn't care if every single one of them were a masturbating, raping, wife-beating corporate executive who drives a truck in his spare time so he can run over little girls with his heavy tire treads; it doesn't mean they're not worth communicating with. **HUSTLER:** Don't you believe that if President Carter, Richard Nixon, Walter Cronkite—people in general—were capable of talking about farting in public, they could communicate on a much more honest, meaningful level? **KRASSNER:** Not just by talking about it. My fantasy is for Walter Cronkite to do it—to actually fart on the air, and say, "That's the way it is." It would humanize him. I remember when we had our first Yip-in and people from CBS News came to interview a few of us. The inter-

viewer asked what we were going to do in Chicago, and I said, "You think I'm gonna tell you?" and smiled. "But I'll tell you one thing. We're going to slip truth serum into the reporters' drinks." Then I watched myself on the news. I said, "You think I'm gonna tell you?" and smiled. They had cut out the rest. Their selection of what I had to say made me look more sinister than I was. **HUSTLER:** How do you go through each day?

**KRASSNER:** Chronologically. Right before I got invited to the Christmas party in Columbus and got appointed to this position I was interviewed, and at one point the interviewer asked me, "What does success mean to you?" I replied, "Trying to do the appropriate thing every moment." And that is the real game in being born again: to be born again every moment.

**HUSTLER:** One final question, Paul. As it stands now, HUSTLER, reconstituted, is more than it was before, not less, and what it always has been and what it is even more now is a political force in this country—yes or no?

**KRASSNER:** Sure. That's the mind-set that lay behind those bullets in Lawrenceville, Georgia. If, as I said before, sexuality is political, then Larry through that gunsight was the living symbol of that political force. 

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