

Lessons to learn from Evel Knieval

Robert Craig "Evel" Knieval made a name for himself beginning in the 1960s performing motorcycle stunts but few know that he began his daredevil career on the snow rather than riding a motorbike. Many people young and old have watched Evel perform grandiose stunts and have admired his bravery. However there are a surprising number of qualities that Evel possesses that can be appreciated and stem from the other lesser known aspects of his life.

Born in the countryside in Butte, Montana, Evel was raised by his grandparents after his parents were divorced and left young Evel to start anew elsewhere. He dropped out of high school in his sophomore year and got a job at the local mining company. However, he was fired from the job when he made the earth mover he was driving perform a 'wheelie' stunt and drove it into the main power line for the town of Butte, cutting off the electricity supply for several hours. His life took a bad turn afterward and over the next few years he spent his time raising mayhem across the town, landing himself in jail. It was here where he gained his nickname Evel Knieval.

Ironically this period changed his focus and he began to get involved in ice hockey and ski jumping events. He won the Northern Rocky Mountain Ski Association Class A men's ski jumping championship in 1957 and also played on a semi-professional hockey team, eventually forming his own and acting as owner, manager, coach and player. In the late 1950s Knieval joined the army and utilised his athletic and acrobatic talents there where he was a pole vaulter.

After his stint in the army he met, married and eventually had a son which contributed to his taking a new direction with his career choices, at least in the short-term; and realizing that he needed to find a more constant source of income he started a guide service for hunters in Montana. He learned that in nearby Yellowstone national park they were culling excess elk that Evel believed could be easily transported elsewhere for hunting. So, at the tender age of 23, Evel hitch-hiked to Washington DC armed with a pair of elk antlers to discuss his proposal with congressmen in Washington. The culling was stopped and since that time elk have been transported to other areas in the states to keep down the population.

He does not consider this to be the turning point in his life however, the next area he tackled was surprising; as an insurance salesman where he credits much of his personal success. Not to the job he did but to the company president W. Clement Stone and his philosophy of maintaining a positive mental attitude. Using this philosophy, Evel sold a record of 271 policies in one week working there and then went on to sell motorcycles, opening several Honda dealerships as a result.

It was not until 1965 that he began his career as a daredevil when he formed a troupe he called Evel Knieval's Motorcycle Daredevils - a show which performed stunts - which would become the basis of what he is known for today. After experience selling insurance to then decide on a career as a daredevil, many could wonder what his own [motorbike insurance](#) policy was like and how it must have grew in his later years as the intensity and risk of his stunts increased to the farthest reaches of his ability.

It is not the daredevil stunts that should be admired however, even though some of the stunts he lived through were world records and beyond what many believed to be humanly possible. It is the determination, drive and the willingness to put all his energy into a goal while staying positive and having faith in himself and his abilities that should be respected. When he started out his troupe he did everything himself including the set up of the stunts, truck driving, promoting events and performing knowing that all aspects of what he was trying to do were vital.

When his stunts started to receive world press he used this as a platform for his choice of causes and messages to youth all over the world including staying away from alcohol and drugs and keeping a positive healthy attitude and lifestyle.

About the Author

Elisha Burberry is an online, freelance journalist and keen movie-goer from Scotland. Her interests include travelling, cooking and photography.

Source: <http://www.tntarticles.com>