

July 7, 1975 • 40¢

**7 Authors to Take on Vacation**

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# People

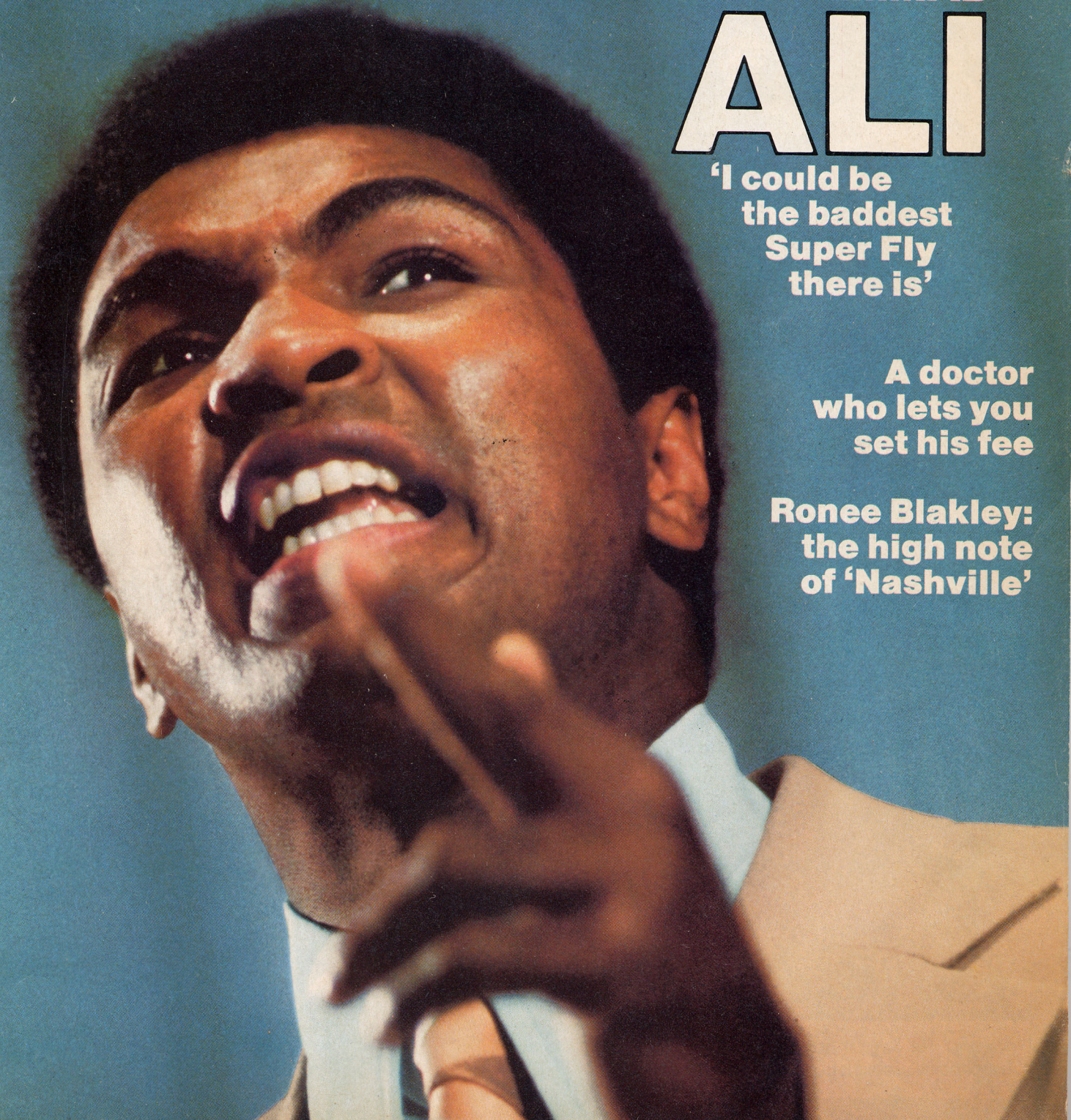
weekly

## MUHAMMAD ALI

**'I could be  
the baddest  
Super Fly  
there is'**

**A doctor  
who lets you  
set his fee**

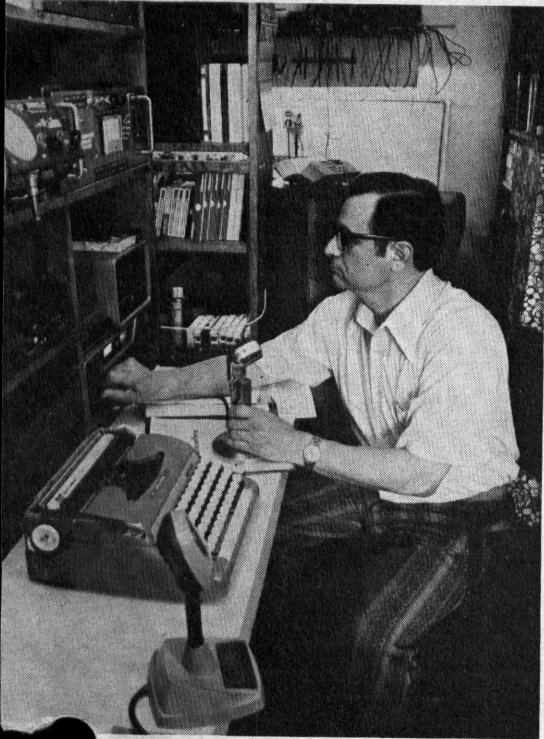
**Ronee Blakley:  
the high note  
of 'Nashville'**





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## DR. RICHARD GRAYSON LETS PATIENTS TELL HIM HOW MUCH OF HIS BILL THEY WANT TO PAY



Ham operator Grayson once contacted another Saint Charles radio enthusiast. Later he became the doctor's patient.



Since Grayson doesn't even like to think about patients' bills, his wife June serves as his accountant and collection agent.



Grayson's daughter, Kris, 21, interrupts their table-tennis game to show her father what she is learning in karate class.

Photographs by Michael Mauney

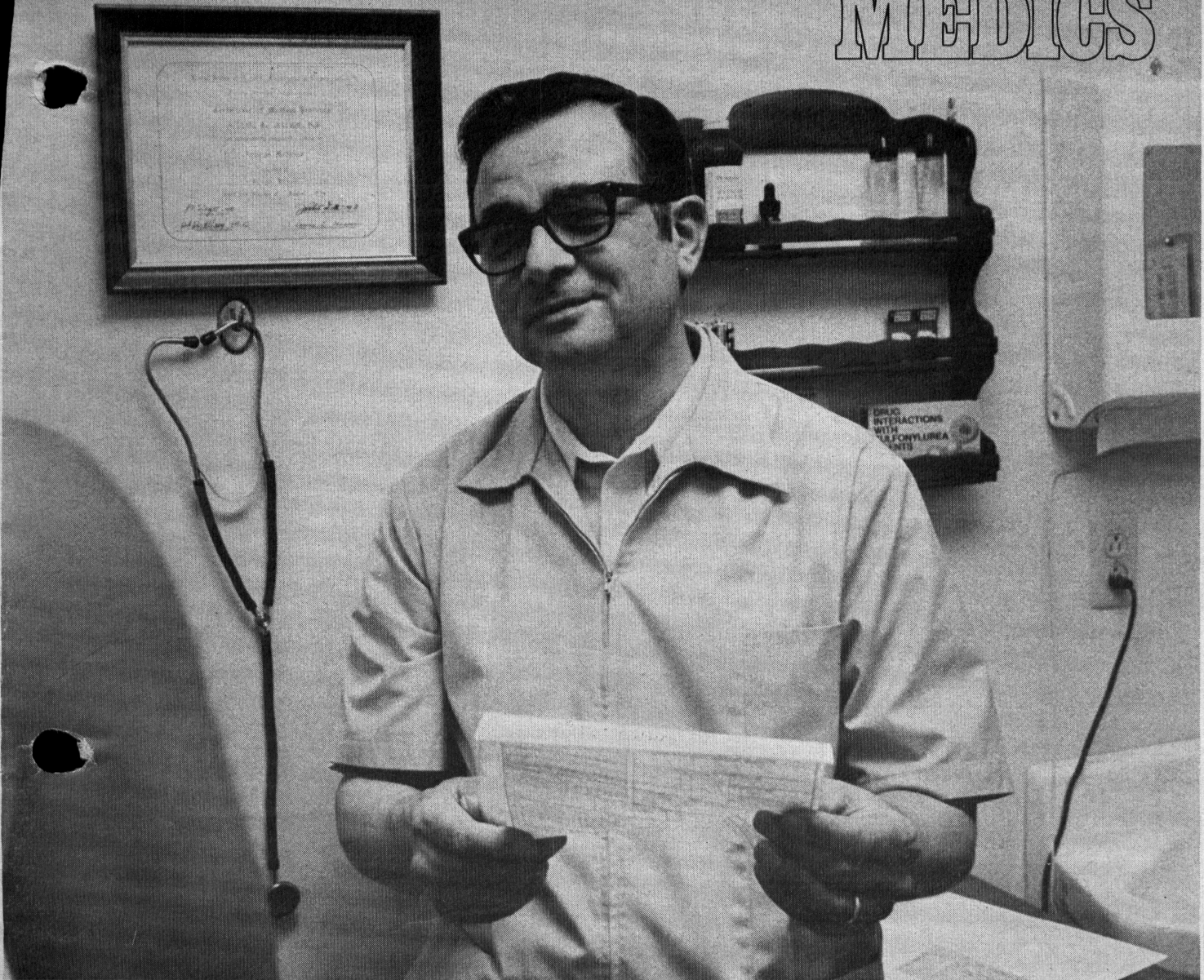
**R**ichard R. Grayson is just a small-town doctor in northern Illinois, but he has an idea how physicians all across the country can spend more time in clinics and hospitals and less in courtrooms and picket lines.

"The best way for a doctor to avoid malpractice suits," says Grayson, "is to make sure all his patients are his friends."

Knowing his patients is a lot easier for a doctor in a town the size of Saint Charles, Ill. (pop. 15,700). But Grayson, a 50-year-old internist, has introduced a plan that ought to win friends even in the biggest cities.

For the past six years Grayson has included with each bill a note advising the patient that if his "financial





**Dr. Richard R. Grayson, here conducting an examination, began his flexible billing system to improve relations with patients.**

circumstances are difficult," he will reduce the amount of the charge. (Grayson's fees are standard—\$10 for an office call, \$30 for a physical exam, up to \$25 for a house call, depending on distance.) "I suggest a 25 percent reduction," Grayson's note says, "but more or less may be appropriate to your situation. No discussion is necessary—simply write the amount of fee reduction you choose on the statement with your remittance."

About 4 out of 100 patients a week take advantage of the offer, usually the requested 25 percent cut. Only one patient—a young father who had recently lost his job—has ever asked for a complete write-off. He got it. Grayson says that in addition to being a pub-

lic-relations success, the flexible billing system has resulted in patients paying faster.

A Chicago native, Grayson graduated from the University of Illinois medical school in 1948. He spent the next 15 years in research, a hospital residency and other small-town practices in Missouri and Illinois before settling in Saint Charles in 1963.

As founder and president of the national 125-member American Academy of Stress Disorders—a physicians' group devoted to studying such tension-related illnesses as ulcers and heart disease—Grayson became increasingly aware of how uneasy it made him to discuss patients' bills.

"I hate talking about money," he

says. "There are far more interesting and less anxiety-provoking topics to speak about with my patients."

For this reason, Grayson never sees the bills. His wife, June, mails them out and logs in payments. The system not only spares him stress but gives him more time for his four children, his ham radio hobby, exploring his family's genealogy and reading novelist-philosopher Ayn Rand.

It is Rand's concept of "enlightened self-interest" that Grayson uses to explain his billing practices. "Everyone says 'God bless you' and thinks I'm a great humanitarian," he says. "But this is no do-gooder scheme. Now I don't have to listen to so many complaints from my patients." **STEVE BERMAN**