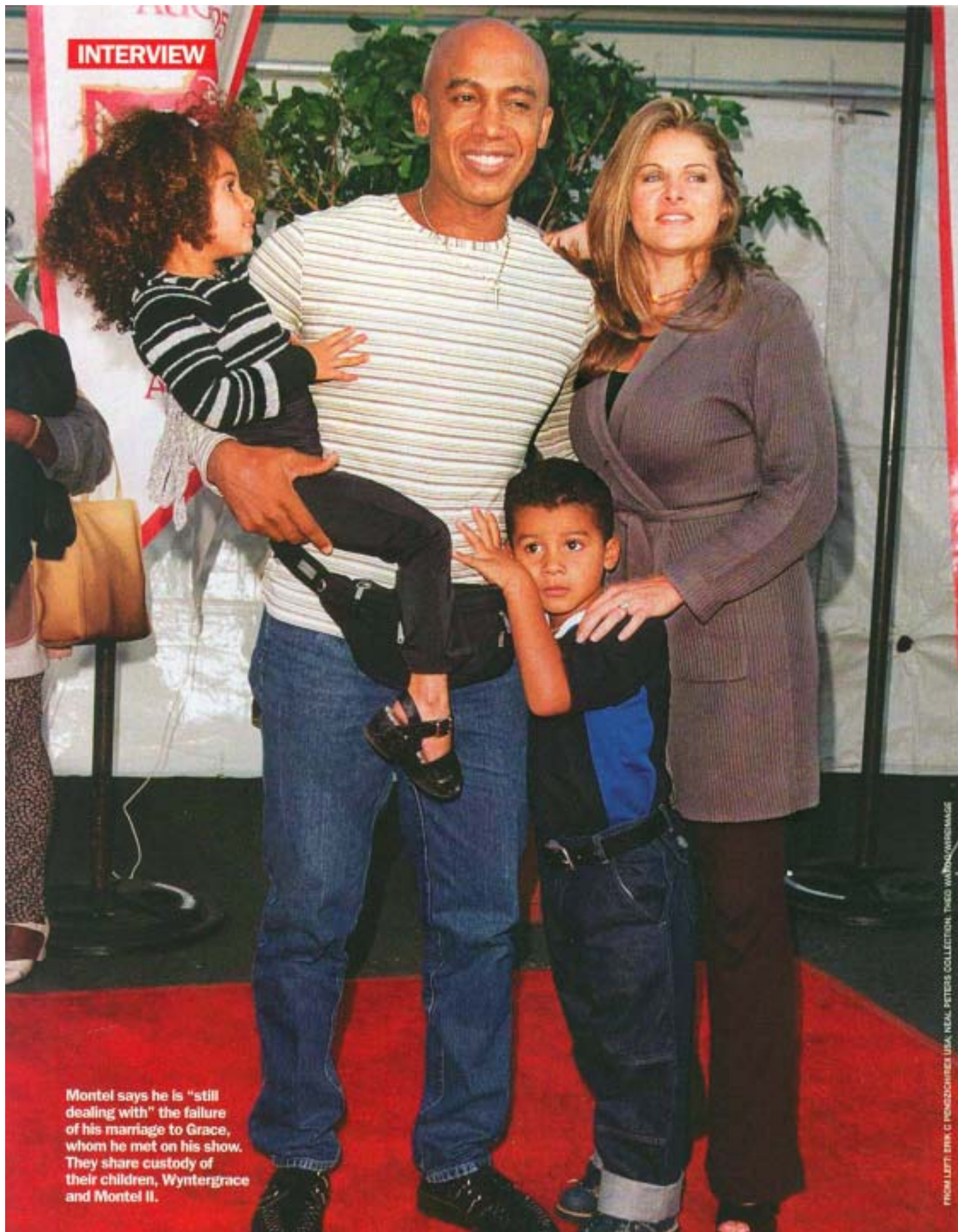


INTERVIEW



Montel says he is "still dealing with" the failure of his marriage to Grace, whom he met on his show. They share custody of their children, Wyntergrace and Montel II.

“My kids saved my life”

Fighting depression and multiple sclerosis while recovering from a painful divorce, Montel Williams almost took his own life...

Daytime talk-show host Montel Williams has helped countless people deal with their troubles, but he confesses that at one point he couldn't live with his own. Despite Montel's outward strength, his battle with multiple sclerosis drove him to the brink of suicide twice.

But it was thoughts of his family — daughters Ashley, 19, Maressa, 15, and Wyntergrace, 9; and son Montel II, 10 — that made the tough-talking former Marine go on living. “I had a conversation with myself and said, ‘How dare you try to do that!’” he admitted to *In Touch*. “How could I have done that to my children?”

After 10 years of unexplained symptoms, Montel, the host of the syndicated *Montel Williams Show*, was diagnosed with the disabling neurological condition MS in 1999. Putting on a brave face, the now-47-year-old publicly vowed to overcome his ailment, but when he lost almost 25 pounds in a month and saw his seven-year marriage dissolve, life didn't seem worth living.

Montel began to contemplate

shooting himself with one of the nine guns he keeps locked in his bedroom. “Nine choices to blow my brains out and end the misery I was in,” he writes in his new book, *Climbing Higher*.

But after holding a .357-caliber Magnum in his hands for 20 minutes, the possibility of incapacitating himself but not dying made him put the firearm away.

A few days later, Montel tried again to take his own life by “accidentally” throwing himself into oncoming traffic in New York. A Cadillac screeched to a halt just in time. “He should have hit me,” Montel says today. “I was actually angry that I couldn't kill myself!”

But thoughts of how his suicide would affect his four children finally stopped him. “I realized how stupid and ridiculous I was being,” he says. Today, Montel copes with daily 7 a.m. workouts to strengthen his weak left side and advocates the medicinal use of marijuana for chronic pain.

“Marijuana takes the pain from a 10 to a 3,” says the performer, who suffers from constant burning sensations in his feet.

“Until you need it, you have no idea. My last bout was so extreme that I was doubled over. We should be testing marijuana's uses as a drug — but don't get me wrong, it's not like I am advocating it for kids.”

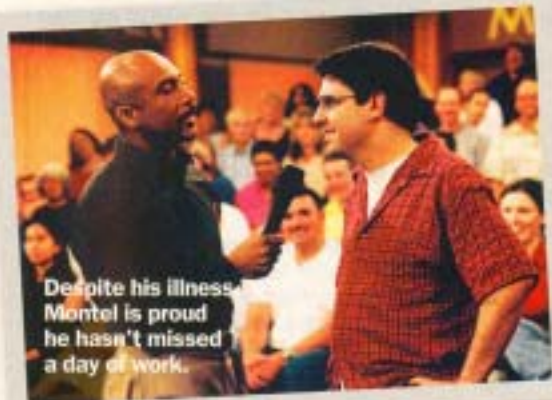
Montel's also doing his part to raise awareness and money for MS research, and he



“I put out this invincible kind of exterior,” Montel tells *In Touch*. “But I know I don't need to pretend to be Superman anymore.”

plans to testify before Congress in the next few months. “I am the poster boy for this disease whether I like it or not,” he explains. “There are two choices: You can either live down to the disease, or live with it and try to reach other people.”

BY LISA ARCELLA



Despite his illness, Montel is proud he hasn't missed a day of work.