

Home, Home On the Xerox

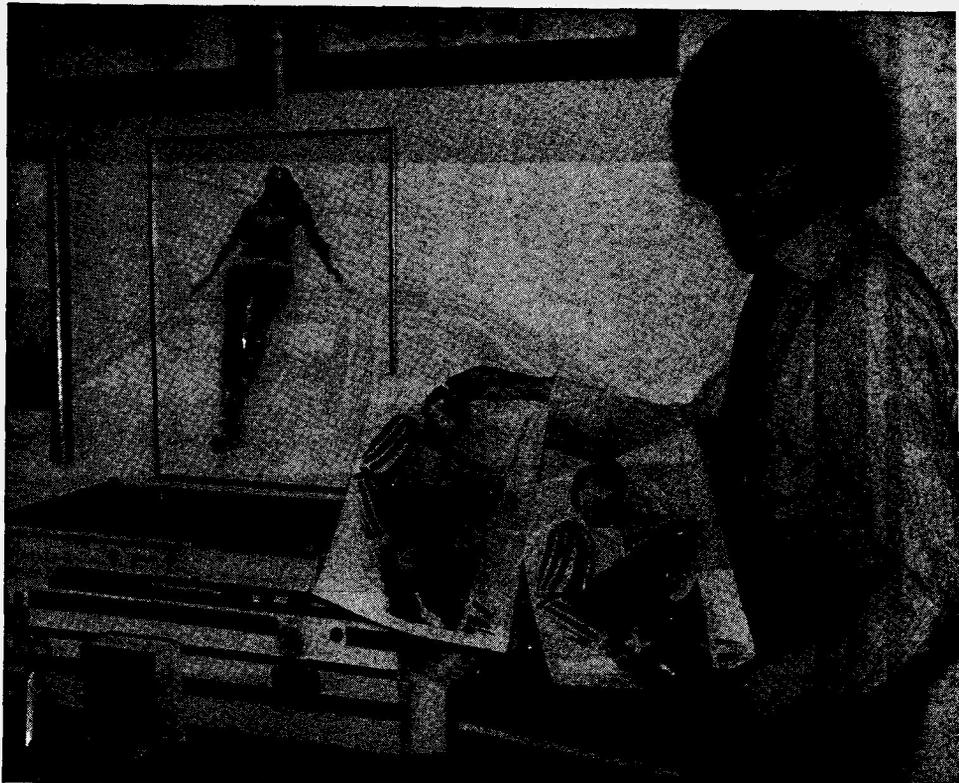
By Ralph Keyes

WHEN *Scruples* BECAME a best-seller, Judith Krantz rewarded herself with diamond earrings and a Xerox 660. After *Princess Daisy* came out, she stepped up to a diamond brooch and a Xerox 4000. "In the beginning, I went around telling everybody that I had a Xerox machine," recalls the Beverly Hills writer. "It was the biggest thrill. Now I take it for granted: 'You mean you *don't* have a Xerox machine?'"

In her pre-Xerox period, Krantz made a carbon of every word she typed to leave in her husband's office. She would leave the originals overnight in the refrigerator in case of fire. There remained the danger of a fire so hot it would melt the refrigerator. Also, she sometimes put the carbon paper in backward. "I went through *agony*," Krantz recalled of this time. "Carbon paper is hell."

Today Judith Krantz is better rested. Because every day she copies, in multiple, that day's output and deposits one copy in her husband's office, keeps one for her files, and saves the original for herself to work on. "It's a question of having a Xerox machine or not sleeping at night," she explains. "Now I don't worry about anything except my Xerox breaking down."

Can it be only two decades ago that we didn't even have Xerox machines? By now, many of us don't just need Xerox copies, we crave them. Nearly 177 billion photocopies will be made on our 2 million Xeroxes and other brands of photocopiers this year, or about 750 for every man, woman, and child (data adapted from studies by Dataquest, Inc., authoritative market analysts for the copy-machine industry). One might speculate that this is a few more copies than are absolutely necessary. Why do we make so many?



Kosinski: Copies of photos, manuscript changes for his foreign publishers.

The answer has to do with human needs other than the need for copies. When speculating about the appeal of copying machines, some psychologists focus on their reproductive nature, the fact that in a sense we use copiers to give birth: With enough copies on file, our words may outlive us. Others see photocopying as more of a taking in than a giving forth. Industrial psychologist Marilyn Machlowitz, who works for a New York insurance company, speaks for this school (and herself) in pointing to a common misapprehension that material one has placed in a Xerox machine is being copied directly onto one's brain,



Mott: Party invitations and recipes.

making redundant any reading of such material.

"Copying has become another perk of business," says office-automation consultant Paul Truax. "It's become part of benefits, like Blue Cross. It's all right to copy your bowling scores. You can't fight that."

Among the least appreciated deprivations involved in leaving an office job is being cut off from one's supply of copies. Dr. Lee Salk thinks that photocopying needs may even keep employees tied to an office long after there is every other reason for leaving. "I'm sure people unconsciously maintain a dependency on some institution simply because it has a copy machine," suggests the psychologist.

When he started working at home a few years ago, Salk found the loss of Xerox a major inconvenience. So, like

Judith Krantz, he got his own machine—a coated-paper 3M.

"At first it's sort of like 'Wow!,'" Salk says about the thrill of owning your own copier. "Look at what I can do with this thing! You run your hands through. Then your kids' hands. Five different ways. You make collages. Andy Warholish things. It's like a new toy."

But the novelty wears off, usually concurrent with the first \$40-plus service call. Due to their expense (in the \$500-to-\$1,500 range for a decent coated-paper model, \$3,000-to-\$5,000 for plain paper), home copiers constitute anything but a trend. But a few pioneers own or lease their own copiers, including lawyers William Kunstler and Charles Morgan (who early on dubbed his his "Ellsberg"); activist Stewart Mott; chef Julia Child; United Artist Eastern Theaters president Salah

tocopier a Jekyll-Hyde. According to its meter, I've used it to make 36,679 copies over the past three years. It's unlikely that they've saved me money. At best I probably break even by using my own Savin rather than the library's Xerox. Also, more upkeep than anticipated is required to keep it producing those crisp, dark copies the sales rep so proudly demonstrated when installing my copier.

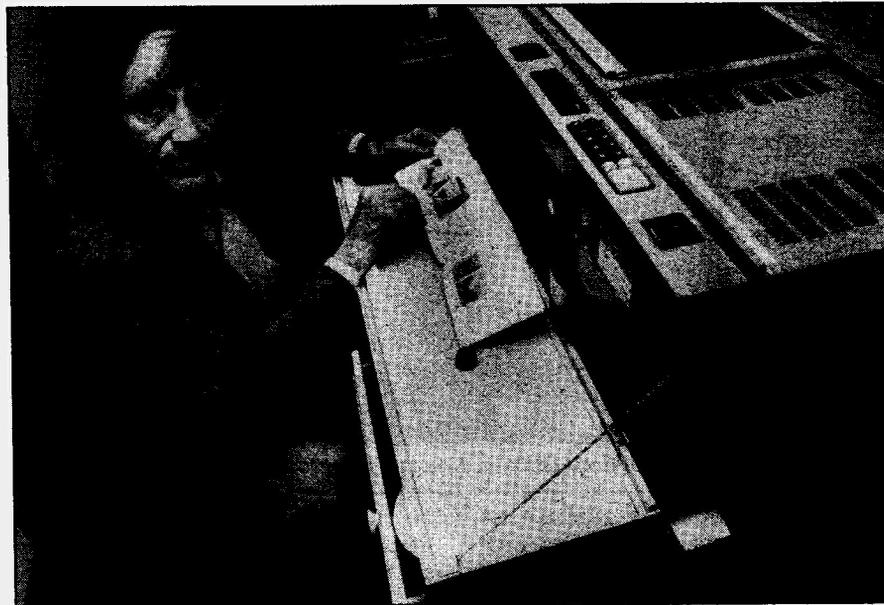
But the real tax on sharing your home with a copier is less tangible. Once you own your own machine, it's amazing how many things turn out to need copying: recipes, copies of Tommy's drawing for each grandparent, two or three of the same item to cross-index. Like Judith Krantz, I make inordinate numbers of "just in case" copies of work in progress. Such profligate photocopying quickly creates a need



Salk: Research and daughter's homework.



Hassanein, England: Scripts, clippings.



Kunstler: Legal briefs copied in his home office in the basement.

Hassanein and his public-relations-executive wife, Elyse England; and writers Erica Jong, Jerzy Kosinski, the Wallace/Wallechinskys, Erma Bombeck, and, of course, Judith Krantz.

A poll of home-copier owners reveals positive feelings overall for this convenience. Lee Salk says his has "paid for itself over and over" in time saved copying research materials and an occasional piece of his daughter's schoolwork. Over three years' time, Julia Child has come to rely on her Saxon for copying recipes and such. "We'd be gone if we didn't have it, rushing up to [Harvard] Square all the time to make copies." By contrast, doctor-author Elizabeth Whelan (*A Baby? . . . Maybe*) has used her copier so little in two years' time that she can't even remember which brand machine she owns.

As a writer, I've found my own pho-

for more folders, folders need files, and files need room. Imposing this burden on somebody else's office is one thing. Moving it into your own home is another.

But I shudder at the thought of life without my Savin. It's saved me many a cold night's trip to the library. Also, I can roll my head slowly along the copier's glass for a stretched-out, Silly Puttyish self-portrait. And I can use my machine at two in the morning, any morning I please.

This is the basic appeal of copier ownership: its confirmation of autonomy. Lee Salk wonders if in these times "being truly independent means owning your own copier." I can't go quite that far. But I do know that few satisfactions can compare with that of telling a visitor to your home who asks for a recipe, "I'll make you a copy."