

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

NEIL MCBAIN

June 25, 1986

at

Leo Burnett Incorporated

Chicago, Illinois

By Scott Ellsworth

Abstracted by Vanessa E. Broussard

For the Marlboro Oral History Project

INTERVIEW #13

Archives Center

National Museum of American History

Smithsonian Institution

TAPE ABSTRACT AND INDEX

NEIL MCBAIN

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Neil McBain was retired at the time of the interview. He had been with Leo Burnett for thirty-four years as an art director.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The interview focuses on early advertisements for Marlboro cigarettes. Major topics include: early uses of the cowboy image, the television cigarette ban, the use of real cowboys in advertising, international advertising, and women smokers.

The interview was conducted in the offices of Leo Burnett, Chicago, Illinois.

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Abstract of interview with Neil McBain, June 25, 1986
Leo Burnett Incorporated, Chicago, Illinois
Interviewer: Scott Ellsworth

Tape 1, Side 1

INVOLVEMENT WITH MARLBORO ACCOUNT

1:45	McBain started working with the Marlboro account group in 1961 or 1962.
3:30	The Marlboro account group stopped using the ta##o because the government told it not to.
3:55	The cowboy was first used as symbolism with backgrounds such as New York City. The copy read "Marlboro Country."
5:25	Art Cane was a photographer admired by McBain. Cane and McBain went around New York and took pictures of Bob Beck in silhouette as the Marlboro cowboy.
7:05	"Marlboro Country" line.
8:55	Cal Bernstein was a photographer for Look Magazine. Beck shot the first ads and Bernstein continued to do the rest.
9:25	The concept of the cowboy in the cities was abandoned after a year.
10:10	In 1963 Neil McBain was working on a Camay soap commercial. He wanted to do an advertisement with a cowboy and a woman on a ranch. This led him to the Four Sixes Ranch in Texas. He later thought about using the prints for Marlboro.
12:30	Dick Stanley was McBain's boss at the time.
13:00	This was the first time a cowboy was used for television commercials.
19:40	McBain worked on the Pillsbury account for eight years before he joined the Marlboro account.
21:40	Jack Landry was a good judge of advertisements.

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22:55 At first it was hard to use still photography in television commercials.

23:15 The Marlboro story begins at the Four Sixes.

26:15 The 1971 ban was difficult for the Marlboro account group. One reason was they could no longer use their music.

27:10 Kenneth Krom took over the print department. There really wasn't a television staff.

28:05 Television was much more exciting because of the action.

28:40 Some photographers refuse to do cigarette advertising.

Tape 1, Side 2

THE USE OF REAL COWBOYS

:15 The account group supplies some clothes for cowboys.

2:40 The account group always sends pictures to ranch owners.

3:20 Location scouts are hired outside of the agency. Producers will then go out and come back with polaroids.

RIVER CROSSING COMMERCIALS

3:45 Anytime one stages a stampede it makes it a difficult commercial. This was one of the toughest. The account group wanted the cattle to swim across rather than walk.

6:05 It is not unusual for a crew to go out on a shot and not come back with anything.

7:55 The image of the cowboy will not go stale because it is heritage and Americana.

10:30 It is hard to come up with good ideas.

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INTERNATIONAL ADVERTISING

- 10:40 The account group has to compromise because of the different cultures which can create problems.
- 12:15 Marlboro Country is more than cowboys.
- 14:55 Real cowboys are used in international advertisements.
- 16:55 Darrell Winfield makes sure that the word gets around. He knows all the ranchers.

EARLY DISCUSSION OF ADVERTISEMENTS

- 21:00 Advertisement #1638 was done for women. Philip Morris found out that women were smoking Marlboros without running ads for women.
- 28:25 McBain was impressed by advertising for Benson & Hedges and Virginia Slims.

Tape 2, Side 1

- :10 McBain is retired but he still works on the Marlboro account. He has been with Leo Burnett for thirty-four years.
- 2:20 Ad #1742 and ad #1744 were the first advertisements to use real cowboys.
- 6:45 "Winter Green" (ad #1851) was photographed in Oregon.
- 7:25 "Marlboro Green" (#1856 and #1872) were photographed in Argentina. This is the only place that one gets tall trees, white water and big country. The cowboys in those ads were models.

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