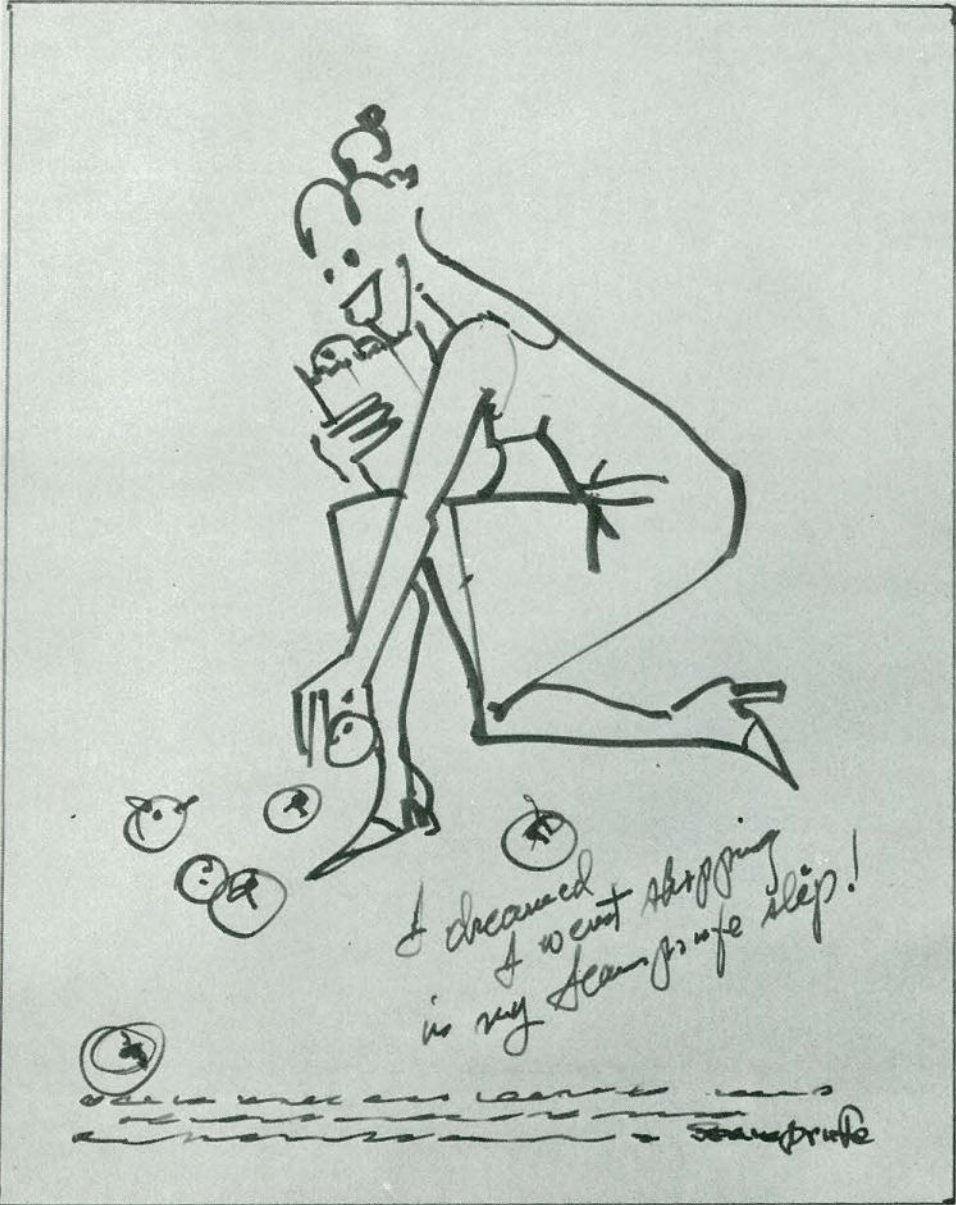


# FEATURES



It started like this . . .

This rough is a copy from memory of the first "I dreamed" ad, composed not by a copywriter, but an art director, for Seamprufe. The company, alas, turned it down.



I dreamed I went shopping in my *maidenform* bra

Wake me quick...this dream's too lovely! Designer hats...millions of them...peacock-bright, moon-dark, sun-spangled. What could be lovelier? Only my figure...so pretty in my Maidenform bra! I never dreamed that I could be so curve-sure, so secure, 'til I discovered Maidenform! Maybe you've dreamed of a bra with letter-perfect fit like this! Shown: Maidenform's *Allo-ette* in white rayon satin. Just one of a vast and varied collection of styles, fabrics and colors. There is a *Maidenform* for every type of figure.

. . . and ended like this

Months later (in 1949), Maidenform, with more acumen, accepted the idea, and the ad above launched the series. Joe Sacco tells here the wild story behind the story.

## Dreams for sale: How the one for Maidenform came true

BY JOE SACCO

Joe Sacco Inc., New York

Last year, the classic Maidenform Dream came back briefly with a touch of show business by Daniel & Charles, the brassiere company's agency since the year the "dream" was abandoned.

In a 1976 tv commercial, a chorus line clad in top hats, vests, cuffs and bras, all worn over leotards, performed while one dancer "dreamed" she was a "knock-out" in her Maidenform bra (AA, April 26, '76).

Ed Kantrowitz, vp-advertising, explained to AA: "We decided to update the image, because we already have a tremendous equity in that mode of advertising. We have spent untold millions toward the promotion of that theme."

How mysterious, how circumlocutory the phrasing! Surely, "a tremendous equity in that mode of advertising" means somebody up there decided Maidenform had better go back to one of the hardest-hitting, highest-longevity advertising campaigns ever created. And how do "untold millions" spent compare to untold

millions produced by the "dreams," from very small beginnings indeed?

**Barefoot Girl with Anxious Smile**

Now here's the tale of the idea's origin, the man who "dreamed" it, the client who rejected it, the girl who "borrowed" it for another agency and client, and my own role of stunned complicity in this comic but colossal saga.

God knows, there are methods and methods for producing ideas. The trouble is, they don't always work. Often as not, it's not method but inspiration, some friction deep in the unconscious, that unleashes the lightning.

And often, when a big one explodes amidst the dreary advertising environment, you mutter, "I wish I'd written that."

That flash of envious feeling ran through me one New York morning in the sun-washed Village apartment where my friend, Herman Davis, first showed me the great idea that became the Maidenform Dream. But Herman hadn't conceived it for Maidenform.

The finished layout, now yellow with

age but of which a copy is available on these pages, featured a beautiful photograph of a barefoot girl wearing an anxious smile and not much else besides a frilly slip. Two oranges had spilled from the top of her brown paper shopping bag. The headline read, "I dreamed I went shopping in my Seamprufe Slip."

Herman was then an art director, and for many years has been the hard-working, publicity-shy creative director of Cadwell-Compton. An art director! What right did he have, not only to come up with this conceptual beauty, but also to write the headline? Especially when he had Mary Fillius, a writer of legendary talent, as his partner. I was sore; I had to be to cover up my feelings of inferiority.

**Seamprufe Turns It Down**

"Goddamn it, Herman, let us do the writing," I said. Gentle Herman smiled. He managed to make me feel better. If I were being analyzed, he said, instead of him, the idea might have come to me. If I were working on that dratted account, if I had his visual genius, I thought.

As for Mary, she had written delicious copy for the presentation ad. The agency was Lester Harrison. Seamprufe saw and turned down the idea later the same day. Therein, it seems to me, lies the cause, the irony and the moral of their continuing mutual obscurity.

For it was Maidenform many months later who said yes to the same idea presented by the Weintraub Agency. And they grew fat and famous together, the agency later evolving into today's Norman, Craig & Kummel.

Mary had gravitated to Weintraub shortly after the Seamprufe debacle. Maidenform was one of a variety of fashion, cosmetics and booze clients there.

Back in those innocent days, before Herman and I entered the world of package-goods mass-marketing, back before tv, we thought the whole agency world was fashion, cosmetics and booze. We learned our trade, sharpened our wits, built our books from print ads for men's and women's garments, buttons and bows and bourbon. Marketing, research, market-shares were exotic words we sometimes heard from afar, faint tom-toms signaling from the dark heartland of the Wasp agencies—Thompson, Y&R, K&E, Ruthrauff & Ryan, Compton, et al.

For several months, Mary did beautiful work at Weintraub. Then she came up against the Maidenform account. It wasn't too different from Seamprufe, a small but valuable account to Weintraub, (Continued on Page 64)



## HOW MAIDENFORM DREAM CAME TRUE

(Continued from Page 63)

billing under \$100,000 a year.

### Dawn of a New Day in Undergarments

The day of the giant brand name in undergarments had not yet arrived. Maidenform was to be the pioneer of package goods marketing in the soft goods business. The "dream" was to become the medium of this historic shift in fashion marketing.

What any fashion advertiser wanted in those days was "advertising support" for the selected stores that handled the brand label. Maidenform was especially tough about deciding on a new idea each year. Because it was annual store promotion novelty that made the difference in each season's success or failure. The chief impact of ads was on store placards that proclaimed, "Advertised in *Life*, *Collier's*, *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*."

At Weintraub in those days, the early '50s, were the young, hip Norman B. Norman and fresh-faced, energetic Gene Kummel, later the founders of today's worldwide agency. And there was Kay Daly, fashion coordinator and Maidenform account woman, who would drive on to the top of Revlon, the pinnacle of women's fashion careers.

The day of the Great Seamprufe Dream Robbery was a desperate one. Mary was simultaneously suffering several major and minor personal crises. They included the rescue of her intimate laundry from the city dump, whence it had wandered in a municipal garbage truck. The bag had been picked up from the bushes outside a Bronxville roadhouse where Mary had stopped for a quick one on the way to the laundromat the night before.

The agency was breathing hot and heavy. Maidenform was impatient. The shape of the axe was flicking on and off like a Cheshire grin above her head. And Mary didn't have an idea in her head. Neither did anyone else.

Except me. It was Herman's idea.

### Getting the Word to Herman

Mary was shocked. I said it was a perfect answer for Maidenform. She said it was robbery. I said Herman would understand. Shouldn't we all help each other survive in this cruel and indifferent trade? She said that was a generous and poetic thought. I said, let's write the ad and tell Herman later. And that's what we did.

Somehow, we didn't tell Herman until much later.

Maidenform okayed the idea immediately. In a few weeks, the ads were produced and set to run. Not big ads, like Herman's spectacular double truck in color, but b&w two-column ads. The cam-

paign would break next month. Next week. Tomorrow. In a leading fashion monthly.

That night, from a saloon telephone, we made the call we'd been putting off for so long. We asked Herman for permission to use his Seamprufe idea for Maidenform, leaning heavily on Mary's need for a new idea that would save her sanity and her job. We needed a new idea by morning.

Gentle Herman said sure. He never hesitated. He hoped we would mention his name if the idea got sold. You know, you never know when you'll need another job.

Mary and I went back to other interesting talk.

The next day, Herman called Mary, and then me, to ask how the hell we had gotten the ad he just saw in the fashion magazine written, approved, produced and published overnight? His laughter and his bafflement made a wonderful mixture on the phone.

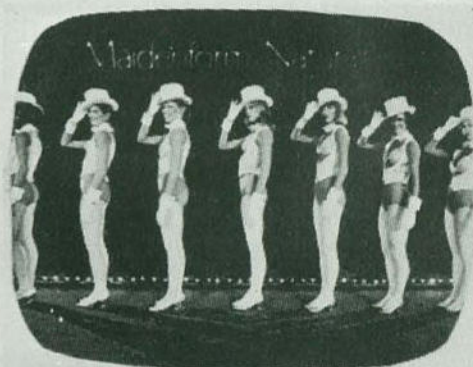
Mary found her laundry, held her job and began a rewarding marriage. Maidenform stormed and conquered the brassiere world, inaugurating the day of the national brand name bra. The account became a multi-million-dollar spender ("untold millions"). Norman, Craig & Kummel was born. One day, I went to work for them.

### The Dream Was Based on Research—Ha

But long before that, the gifted angel died in an oxygen tent in Rochester, N.Y. Let's say her spirit lives in the new Maidenform Dreams.

I noted with skepticism a further revelation from the Ad Age story about Maidenform today: "The original dream concept is based on research conducted by Maidenform that indicated deep down, every woman is a born exhibitionist."

Maybe. Or was research conducted to confirm a witty and moving idea that no known marketing approach of that time would have dreamed to conceive? #



Wearing bras over leotards, a Maidenform chorus line touted the merits of No-Show Naturals in a tv revival of the "dream."

## HIGHLY SENSITIVE AREA NEGLECTED

# Is business correspondence a bothersome chore? Beware

If the consuming and voting public is business' best friend, then business men should learn how to write and answer letters to it, international marketing consultant Walter Weir believes. It is, he maintains, the most neglected area of corporate communications.

BY WALTER WEIR  
Partner, LaBorie/Weir S.A.  
Switzerland

American business today spends billions of dollars and hires countless experts to guide it in its advertising, its press releases, its stockholder relations, its annual reports, the interviews and speeches of its officers—all for the purpose of building and maintaining a favorable image.

Yet on its most intimate daily contact with its customers, its suppliers and the public at large—the letters written every working day by its entire staff, beginning with its chairman and its president—it spends little more than postage and the cost of its stationery and has no one in charge of this highly sensitive area, beyond a senior citizen in the mailroom to see that incoming mail is distributed and outgoing mail posted.

In fact, business not only neglects the quality of its correspondence, it finds it so unwelcome an intrusion on its time and other duties that it tends also to commit the most damaging neglect of all—responding to its correspondence either late or not at all. Not replying to someone when he writes is totally comparable to not replying to someone when he speaks. It is ignoring him, and ignoring

someone is tantamount to insulting him.

There is no denying that some letters invariably come from people from whom no immediately tangible benefit can be derived. But for one reason or another, good or bad, they went to the trouble to write and expect a response of some kind. The benefit to be derived from responding may not be immediately tangible and neither may the resentment that nonresponse brings about. But it has its effect and it's not good.

The cost of postage, of course, has risen and it will rise even further, as the most misunderstood of governmental operations, the Postal Service, grows increasingly expensive and inefficient at the same time. However, just as government fails to see the competent exchange of information as the most vital fabric of our society, so business downgrades the one form of communication far more personal, far more highly regarded, far more influential in countless ways and far more vital to the daily functioning of personal and commercial affairs than advertising, press releases or annual reports.

The latter, obviously contrived, obviously self seeking, are also obviously suspect. A letter, necessarily a communication between two individuals, need not be and does not start off as being suspect. This is what makes a company's correspondence its greatest opportunity for creating good will and winning confidence.

### Letter Is More Sacrosanct than Talk

From the chairman on down through the ranks, it should never be forgotten that a company's correspondence partakes of a tradition in human communication more sacred and more sacrosanct than speech itself. Human conversation has about it a casualness, a spontaneity, a spur-of-the-moment nature that results in its being taken considerably less seriously than words written in a letter. Writing a letter is a deliberate act. It requires the taking of time, the giving of thought and the exercise of judgment.

Letters are valued far more than conversation. They are kept (because they can be kept) and even treasured for years. They are reread with interest

and even deep emotional involvement. They become as much a part of the person who wrote them as if they had been inscribed on his or her flesh. A foolish statement is dismissed and forgotten; a foolish statement in a letter sears the soul. Spoken words are sound on air. Written words are persistent ink on paper.

Business relationships—client with customer—are seen as somehow different from everyday people-to-people relationships. But they are not. If a customer feels himself mistreated or neglected by a business, his emotional reaction is little different from what it is to a person. This definitely applies to business letters which draw in countless ways on the values that people attribute to letters generally.

To the average human being, a day that brings a letter is preferable to a day that brings none. Few of the happenings of a day, in fact, stir the anticipation, the hope, the eagerness of the arrival of mail. Even the ring of the telephone and its particular promise of communication cannot match that of the arrival of a sealed letter. Even in a business office, when mail is deposited in the incoming tray it is impossible for the individual sitting at the desk not to wonder what is in it and occasionally impossible for him to resist at least inspecting it, no matter how busy he is at the time.

### Form Letter Makes 'em Feel Cheated

None of us relishes being overheard when we are speaking to another. Yet learning that we have been does not begin to arouse the resentment or excite the rage we feel on learning that someone has been looking through our mail, and this includes even carbons of it. The respect, the personal attachment given letters cannot be overstated.

It is genuinely phenomenal—which is why there is inevitably a feeling of having been cheated to open an envelope (Continued on Page 67)

## FACTS ABOUT ADVERTISING YOUR FRIENDS AND RELATIVES MAY NOT UNDERSTAND

### Advertising indicates freedom of choice

In a very real sense, advertising is a bright symbol of freedom. It is a method of urging which immediately indicates the existence of freedom of choice. If there was no liberty there would be no advertising. Someone would tell us, not coax us.

William Green, 1873-1952, President of the American Federation of Labor.