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Legends in Advertising: Mad Man David Ogilvy

By Zachary Pettit | April 28, 2014

Perhaps one of the best parts of Mad Men is the surplus of hat tips and Easter Eggs it throws to its real-life industry source material. Sometimes it's as big as this season's Milton Glaser promos, and other times it's as subtle as last week's mention that the Draper-meltdown-inducing Hershey account went to Ogilvy—which, in real life, it did. As [the Gothamist detailed](#), Phil Dougherty wrote about the famous account in his New York Times column on Valentine's Day, 1969 (the day the episode takes place).

David Ogilvy and other ad greats (such as [Bill Bernbach](#)) are constantly referenced in Mad Men. As the latest in Print's Legends in Advertising series: Who was Ogilvy?

To start, as [Ogilvy & Mather documents](#), he once sent the following memo to a partner:

Will Any Agency Hire This Man?

He is 38, and unemployed. He dropped out of college. He has been a cook, a salesman, a diplomatist and a farmer. He knows nothing about marketing and had never written any copy. He professes to be interested in advertising as a career (at the age of 38) and is ready to go to work for \$5,000 a year. I doubt if any American agency will hire him.

However, a London agency did hire him. Three years later he became the most famous copywriter in the world, and in due course built the tenth biggest agency in the world.

The moral: it sometimes pays an agency to be imaginative and unorthodox in hiring.

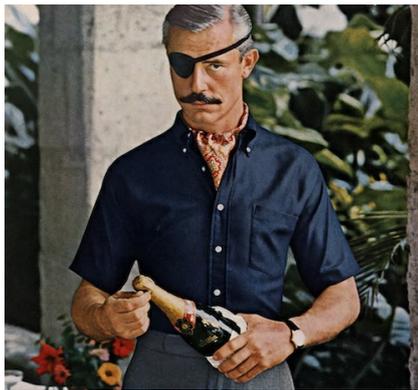
(Notice any more Draper parallels?)

Ogilvy (1911-1999) is often best summed up, simply, as "the father of advertising"—a title bestowed on more than a few, but more accurate in some cases than others. As Ogilvy & Mather's bio recaps, he came to the US via his European roots in 1939 and worked for Gallup's Audience Research Institute, which shaped his research-focused strategic thinking. A decade later, though he hadn't yet penned an ad, he opened Ogilvy, Benson & Mather.

Ogilvy went on to produce an astounding array of work for some of the biggest clients around—Lever, Shell, Sears, Rolls-Royce, American Express—and shaped the agency into one of the world's most prominent. For his efforts, he was inducted into the US Advertising Hall of Fame in 1977.

Like all ad greats, though, the work best tells the story.

Here's a selection of Ogilvy's ads (click for larger images), sprinkled with some of his quips throughout.



Hathaway's Aertex Club—a damnably smart leisure shirt

(with 982,693 tiny windows to keep you cool)

Other blessings: fat, strong across. Well-tough indomitable bones. And a pair of curiously long thin ribs that won't shiver out of your trousers.

For names of men and this free Dictionary of Names and Abbreviations, write C. F. Hathaway, Waterbury, Maine. Or in New York, call OXford 7-5566.

"Your wear a white shirt before sunset?" says Hathaway.

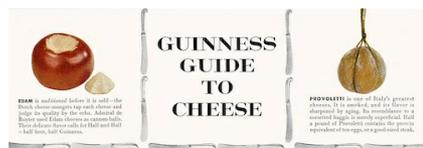
All images © Ogilvy & Mather, www.ogilvy.com

"I don't know the rules of grammar. If you're trying to persuade people to do something, or buy something, it seems to me you should use their language."



"The creative process requires more than reason. Most original thinking isn't even verbal. It requires 'a groping experimentation with ideas, governed by intuitive hunches and inspired by the unconscious.' The majority of businessmen are incapable of original thinking because they are unable to escape from the tyranny of reason. Their imaginations are blocked."

"Where people aren't having any fun, they seldom produce good work."



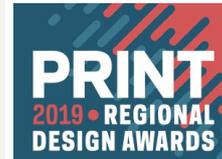
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