

SEVEN

BIG IDEAS

In the post-World II period, national advertising reached Americans through a handful of radio networks and four major magazines: *Life*, *Look*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *Reader's Digest*. Television was in its infancy; just one in ten Americans owned a TV set. With several strong newspapers in every major city, it was still largely a print world. The economy was booming, with a flood of new products coming onto the market.

Advertising had settled into a predictable pattern. The novelist and lawyer Louis Auchincloss recalls this exchange with Ogilvy in the bar of the Knickerbocker Club in New York.

Tell me, are there any statutes or laws in this country that require advertising to be boring?

I assured him that there weren't, although I asserted it was one of our oldest and proudest traditions.

It could be changed, then?

"I was in at the birth of a new age," Auchincloss remembers concluding.



Operation Overlord established its beachhead in America on September 1, 1948, as Hewitt, Ogilvy, Benson & Mather, Inc. The British sponsors, Mather & Crowther and S. H. Benson, each put in

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\$40,000 as preferred stock and held control. Anderson Hewitt, the new agency's president, mortgaged his home and put in \$14,000. Ogilvy came up with \$6,000, for a total of \$100,000. He would be secretary, treasurer, and research director.

Since it was obvious that neither of the principals had the qualifications to run the creative end of things—the actual copy and art—that kind of talent would have to be hired. The agency's charter was to assist British clients in the United States. The London partners disagreed about whether the new agency could hope to flourish exclusively on British clients. It was decided that the new company would devote itself to British interests but not refuse any American account offered.

HOBM opened for business at 345 Madison Avenue, across from Brooks Brothers, Madison Avenue's outfitter. *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, a 1950s novel (and movie) about a public relations man, reflected the style of the period. The most striking furnishing of Ogilvy's office was not the two large Audubon prints but a set of green and red lights outside his office door indicating either it was OK to walk in or Do Not Enter, if he did not wish to be disturbed.

It was David against Goliath: a start-up British outpost against dozens of major agencies with established pedigrees. A handful of tiny overseas accounts with unfamiliar names. Minimal funding, an unproven president, and a brash research director with lots of theories but no practical experience in advertising. Not exactly a sure bet. Ogilvy understood it would be a tough struggle to carve out a niche in the United States, but he put up a brave front and, on the day the agency opened, outlined his goals in a bold memo.

This is a new agency, struggling for its life. For some time, we shall all be overworked and underpaid.

Our main object is to provide a pleasant living for the people who work with us. Next comes profit.

In hiring, the emphasis will be on youth. We are looking for young Turks. I have no use for toadies or hacks. I seek gentlemen with brains.

Agencies are as big as they deserve to be. We are starting this one on a shoestring, but we are going to make it a great agency before 1960.

Ogilvy often talked about a list he set down at the outset, of the five clients he wanted most: Shell, Lever Brothers, Campbell Soup, General Foods, and Bristol-Myers. A wildly ambitious roster. The only list found in his files names 23 prospects. General Foods, Shell, and Bristol-Myers were on it, at #3, #9, and #17. Not the other two, although he eventually won all five. The name at the top was Cunard, which he also won.

The four starter accounts the British partners sent across the Atlantic spent only \$250,000 a year on advertising.* Fifteen percent of that, the standard agency commission, is \$37,500. How could the agency survive? Wedgwood China and British South African Airways would never be mass-market goods. Guinness and Bovril were household words in the United Kingdom but unknown in the States with unknowable potential. The advertising would be created by a copywriter and an art director hired for their big-agency experience, but neither was a star or a budding genius. Ogilvy was later to proclaim the preeminence of creative ideas: "Unless your advertising is based on a BIG IDEA it will pass like a ship in the night." In the beginning, the agency's promotion materials said the heart of the operation was copy research.

Ogilvy the research director was taking the train home to Connecticut one evening in 1950 when an idea for Guinness popped into his head. He got off at the next stop and called his office: "You won't believe this, I've had an idea." (He said his family was equally astounded with this first evidence that he could be creative.)

The idea was to borrow interest for Guinness from the fascinating foods you drink it with. Immersing himself in a Yale biologist's book on shellfish, Ogilvy conceived "The Guinness Guide to Oysters," a guide to nine varieties of oysters. The text was by copywriter Peter Geer; the concept was pure Ogilvy.

OYSTER BAYS. Oyster Bays are mild and heavy-shelled. It is said that oysters yawn at night. Monkeys arm themselves with small stones. They watch for an oyster to yawn and

* About \$3 million in current dollars.

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then pop the stone in between the shells. “Thus the oyster is exposed to the greed of the monkeys.”

BLUEPOINTS. These delicious little oysters from Great South Bay somewhat resemble the famous English “natives” of which Disraeli wrote: “I dined or rather supped at the Carlton . . . off oysters, Guinness and broiled bones, and got to bed at half past twelve. Thus ended the most remarkable day hitherto of my life.”

An instant success, the oyster guide was followed by guides to game birds, cheeses, and other foods that go well with Guinness. More accounts came across the Atlantic: Viyella fabric, the Scottish Council, HP Sauce, *Punch* magazine, and Macintosh raincoats. They were small accounts, but labor intensive. By 1950, the staff had grown to 41.

One of the first and best hires was a treasurer who knew *nothing* about accounting or advertising. Shelby Page had been working at the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and was introduced to Ogilvy by Hewitt, who had married Page’s cousin. Ogilvy did not want to hire Page at the start but was impressed that his grandfather, Walter Hines Page, had been U.S. Ambassador to England during World War I. Page cheerfully agreed to learn something about finance, picked up a book on advertising agency accounting, and took a correspondence course.

What Page brought to the agency was common sense. “I figured my job was to try to keep no more money going out than came in. Sometimes that was difficult with David. The minute we had any profits, David would say he needed a new creative genius.” A self-described “skinflint,” Page kept the agency out of financial trouble. One of his several duties was doing things Ogilvy avoided, such as firing anyone. Before Ogilvy left for his long summer vacation, he would tell Page who had to go. By the time he returned, the body had disappeared as surely as if a Mafia contract had been put out on it, said one who observed the ritual.

If Ogilvy shied away from firing people, he had no qualms about imposing his standards. “You had to have the hide of a rhinoceros to survive a meeting with Ogilvy, or have done your homework in

depth and executed your strategy impeccably,” said David McCall, a copywriter in the 1950s and early 1960s. “He was not above the ad hominem method or any other attack that he felt would get through to the sinner. And, like De Gaulle, he felt that praise should be a rare commodity lest you devalue the currency.” Ogilvy’s insistence on high standards—and his own hard work—inspired a feeling of working in a great place. He was usually the last to leave the office, and people worked weekends without a murmur. It was Camelot, says an account manager of the period

The payoff from installing Hewitt as president came when he delivered two accounts: Sun Oil (Sunoco), then a major company with thousands of gas stations, and, through his father-in-law, Chase National Bank. To get Sun, the agency had to discount the 15 percent commission. Since that was verboten—the full 15 percent was then mandated by the American Association of Advertising Agencies, known as the 4As—money was surreptitiously kicked back to Sun. Ogilvy would later take the lead in changing the 4As from a club to a professional organization. In the meantime, he chose to circumvent the rules.

Even with the Sun account, the agency was running out of money. Page and Hewitt went to Walter Page (another relative) at Morgan Guaranty, who took a chance and lent \$50,000 to help them through a shaky time. It was a matter of survival, says Page. “We didn’t have money to pay the payroll. The initial \$100,000 was gone. It was the difference between life and death for the agency.”



Ogilvy’s first win on his own was the cosmetics queen Helena Rubinstein, to whom he had been introduced by “her crazy son” Horace Titus. It was “Madame Rubinstein” by day, “Princess Gourielli” in the evening, from her second marriage to a purported Russian prince (a marketing ploy, some thought). A tyrant who fired her agencies every year or so, Madame was regarded by Ogilvy as “a fascinating witch.” He charmed her and flattered her, crowning her “the first lady of beauty science” in his ads. She was a diminutive woman, only four feet ten inches tall, with black hair in a tight chignon, and looked old but well preserved, like a mummy. With a

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prominent nose, a commanding manner, and a hard middle-European accent, Madame did much of her business from a Salvador Dalí–designed bed in her three-story house on Park Avenue, its walls covered with portraits of her by different artists.

With a personal fortune of over \$100 million, Madame could indulge her passion for jewels. Gazing into a Tiffany’s window, she explained: “I just *luff* looking at jewels. They rest my eyes.” Her assistant, who did not know jewels, was said to sort them by color: whites, reds, and blues. Ogilvy said she filed them alphabetically: diamonds under D, emeralds under E, and so on. A tough lady who fled Poland carrying her secret formulas, Madame nonplussed burglars who got into her apartment and demanded the jewels in her safe. “I’m almost 90. They’re not here and if they were, I wouldn’t give them to you. I’m a very old lady. If you want to kill me, go ahead.”

“Your ads are too big,” she told Ogilvy at lunch, folding a large napkin in half, then half again, then again. “That big. That’s how big they should be,” also insisting that 12 different face creams be shown in a single ad. Ogilvy overrode the first stipulation and met the second with a headline: “Now Helena Rubinstein solves 12 Beauty Problems.” Faced with a parade of creative alternatives before seeing the agency’s recommendation, Madame snapped at Ogilvy: “Enough of that crap. Let’s see the one you like the best.” When she wanted to add points to a 60-second commercial and was told they would make the commercial too long, she had the answer: “Buy 10 more seconds.”

She berated Ogilvy for not paying enough attention to her. “You’re getting all these new accounts. We’re not important any more.” He went back to the agency, gathered all the people who worked on her account—writers, art directors, account executives, financial types, secretaries, mailroom people, about 30 in all—and marched them back to her bedroom. “I want to show you how important your account is. All these people work on your business.” Madame took in the scene. “They must be very stupid people, because they do bad work.”

The work could not have been that bad. A Rubinstein “Hair Cosmetics” ad revolutionized the company’s advertising approach, replacing small units with a “news” approach in large newspaper ads.

Within three weeks, a single advertisement brought in orders equal to sales estimates for the next 12 months. No more could run until the factory increased its production. When Ogilvy resigned the Rubinstein business in 1963, the press noted that it was the first agency that had kept the account for more than a year; he held it for 15.



Over the next decade, Ogilvy would produce a striking succession of advertising campaigns that put him on the map as a creative force and built his agency into a powerhouse that attracted the biggest advertisers in America. Several of those campaigns would take their place in advertising history. He called them his Big Ideas.

The first involved a small shirt company in Waterville, Maine. In 1951, C. F. Hathaway was not widely known and had never advertised. It was proposing to spend just \$30,000 to compete against far bigger campaigns behind well-known shirts like Arrow. “I almost burst into tears,” said Ogilvy. Hathaway’s president, Ellerton Jette, candidly admitted it would never be a large account and the agency would never get rich handling it, but promised he would never fire the agency and never change a word of copy, promises he honored.

The story of “The Man in the Hathaway Shirt”—with his black eye patch—has been told many times, with slight variations. There is no dispute that Ogilvy, purportedly still the agency’s research director at the time, was the sole creator of one of the most famous campaigns in advertising history. He knew he had to do something unorthodox. At some point he mused, “I wouldn’t mind an elegant black patch over one eye.” But it was far from a “Eureka!” moment. On his lists of photo ideas, it was #9 in one, #18 in another, and he bought several eye patches almost as an afterthought for 50 cents each at a drugstore en route to the photo session. “Just shoot a couple of these to humor me,” he remembered telling the photographer, “then I’ll go away and you can do the serious job. As soon as we saw the photographs, we knew we’d got something.”

The model was George Wrangel, a middle-aged mustached man resembling the author William Faulkner. In one version of his background, Wrangel was a displaced White Russian baron; in another, a noble Spaniard from Málaga. There was nothing wrong with his eye.

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The patch was there to imbue the advertisement with what Ogilvy called “story appeal.” The reader wonders how the arrogant aristocrat lost his eye. Ogilvy said he discovered the concept of story appeal in a book by Harold Rudolph, a former agency research director who had analyzed attention and readership factors of illustrations. It was the first time shirt advertising focused as much on *the man wearing the shirt* as on the shirt itself.

The first insertion, in *The New Yorker*, cost only \$3,176. Within a week, every Hathaway shirt in stock was sold out. The advertisement caused such a stir that it was reprinted alongside articles in *Life*, *Time*, and *Fortune*. It was imitated around the world. Other companies ran ads featuring eye patches on dogs, cows, and babies. Men and women wearing eye patches turned up at fancy-dress balls. The eye patch became a stock gag on Broadway, on TV, even in cartoons in *The New Yorker*. One showed three men looking at a store window display of shirts; in a second panel, they walk out of the store all wearing eye patches. “For some reason I’ve never known,” said Ogilvy, the eye patch “made Hathaway instantly famous. Perhaps more to the point it made *me* instantly famous too.”

The idea was prompted by a photograph of Ambassador Lewis Douglas, who had injured his eye while fly fishing in England. The Man in the Hathaway shirt—always the same man—became so recognizable it once ran with only the photograph—no headline, no copy, no mention of the brand—and was instantly identified by readers as a Hathaway ad. Wrangel, until then a fur salesman, married an heiress and moved to a castle in Spain. Later on, negotiating a model fee, he told Ogilvy, “My dear old boy, it’s not the money, you know—that doesn’t mean a thing to me. I’m glad to help you out, old fellow. This thing is bigger than both of us.”

The copy “tells the truth and makes the truth interesting,” said Ogilvy, who poured himself into its writing and described it as “a silk glove with a brick inside it.” David McCall called it the clearest, most amusing copy in history. “He wrote it for himself. Who else would have started a piece of shirt copy with this sentence: ‘The melancholy disciples of Thorstein Veblen would have despised this shirt.’ Ogilvy didn’t give a damn whether his audience knew who Veblen was, much less what he thought. It just felt good to him.”

Whatever his reasoning, the copy was hard sell, the down-to-earth virtues of fabrics, cut, stitching, even buttons, all sewed up with a veneer of sophistication and wit.

Ogilvy admitted that Hathaway's aristocratic aura reflected the Secret Life of David Ogilvy, a fantasy derived from the classic James Thurber short story, "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." Ogilvy/Mitty was shown in evocative settings—in a vintage Rolls-Royce, with his collection of butterflies, playing an oboe, conducting in Carnegie Hall, leaving \$5 million (and all his Hathaway shirts) to his son, copying a Goya at the Metropolitan Museum, contemplating a \$2,000 Purdy shotgun, or playing the organ.

The Hathaway magic started a blazing-hot streak in new business. The agency was creating the "sockiest" copy in America, commented a 1951 industry newsletter. "By now there can be no fluke. It's happened too often."



When his London partners first offered him Schweppes, then an upper-crust British soft drink and mixer, Ogilvy tried to turn it down. Its budget was only \$15,000, which would produce just \$2,250 in commissions, and he was fed up with "shop window" accounts, he told Francis. "The problem is to avoid getting bogged down in trivia." Pressured into accepting the business, Ogilvy's initial creative approach almost lost him the account at the start. He proposed announcing Schweppes as now available in the United States at 15 cents; the client had a different plan for their high-class prestige line: "Plush it up."

The idea of putting Schweppes's bearded U.S. president in the ads came from the U.K. management, says Stephen Fox in *The Mirror Makers*. Ogilvy says explicitly it was his. The true story may never be known. What is known is that Commander Edward ("Teddy") Whitehead was an impressively handsome man, a physical fitness buff with a magnificent dark red, luxuriously thick beard—a quintessentially perfect photographic subject. After what Ogilvy called "a token show of diffidence, which lasted only five minutes," Whitehead backed off his view that it was undignified and "un-English" for the head of a company to appear in advertising and agreed to become the

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embodiment of Schweppes in the United States and the spokesman for “Schwepperverscence.”

The first ad showed Whitehead alighting from a British airliner in New York, with bowler and furred umbrella, carrying a dispatch case said to hold the secrets of the Schweppes “elixir,” looking more distinguished than any diplomat. “My bathing suit,” said Whitehead. “That was what was in there.”

“Whitehead’s bearded mug has captured the imagination of the American public,” marveled Ogilvy, reporting the campaign was an instant hit. Whitehead stopped traffic on Park Avenue. Cab drivers turned and asked, “Are you that Schweppes guy?” People passing on the street pointed out “Mr. Schweppes.” In Hollywood, Gary Cooper asked for his autograph. But initial sales were disappointing, and the head office started to get cold feet. After only one month, Ogilvy was told to develop a completely different style of advertising, more hard-hitting, with more price emphasis. He fought back, saying he had come to the conclusion that “Teddy’s hairy kisser is a far more important property than any of us realized.” He prevailed; the Schweppesman stayed.

Ogilvy personally vetted every detail of the advertising. The ads portrayed the Commander as a distinguished presence, turning up at polo matches, backstage at the theater, with jockeys at a racetrack. He asked Ogilvy of one scene: “Do you think this makes me look like a rabbi?” “You might be mistaken for a rabbi,” Ogilvy agreed, “by somebody who saw only the photograph. But there’s a headline under it—and who ever heard of a rabbi named Commander Whitehead?” In one ad, a motherly looking type gazes at the Commander and exclaims in the headline: “Bless me, Teddy, you’ve grown a beard!”

Sales leapt 600 percent in the first six months. Hotels and bars started stocking Schweppes. In many, Schweppes was the only choice if you asked for a gin and tonic. It was, wrote the *Financial Times*, “one of the most successful campaigns for a British product ever waged anywhere at any time—and this in the land of promotion.” The agency was doing well enough to run an ad in the *London Times*: “Success of British Agency in America.” There was a bit of magic about the upstart; it was winning almost every new account it sought, although Ogilvy admitted that he competed for only those accounts he felt certain he could win.



1952 was a presidential election year in which Rosser Reeves made advertising history with 20-second TV commercials featuring General Dwight Eisenhower as “a man of peace.” One of the few on Madison Avenue who supported Adlai Stevenson, Ogilvy told his brother-in-law, “Rosser, I hope for your sake it all goes well and for the country’s sake it goes terribly.” It went well for Rosser. The articulate Stevenson lost to a war hero. “Can you imagine Winston Churchill allowing himself to be made into television commercials the way poor Eisenhower did?” Ogilvy sourly observed.

Impatient with trying to convey to writers and art directors what he wanted, more and more Ogilvy was *showing* them how to do it, writing the advertising and directing its look—big beautiful photographs (never artwork), usually a one-line headline beneath the photo serving as a caption, plus three blocks of readable text in a simple classic typeface. Ogilvy moved the names of products, usually relegated to logos at the bottom of ads, to the headline at the top.

Clients got “a first class ticket.” The advertising reeked of quality: the products advertised, the tone of the writing, the uncluttered layouts, and where they appeared. The tiny start-up bought more pages in *The New Yorker* than all but one other agency.* Though the ads ran in *The New Yorker*, their design derived from *Holiday*, an upscale travel magazine Ogilvy admired for the way the magazine was laid out. He reasoned that as people read a magazine, wouldn’t they prefer to read an advertisement in the same spirit, without logotypes or copy set in (his main hobgoblin) reverse white type on a solid background. Unreadable, he argued. It never seemed to occur to him that the editorial style of *The New Yorker*, at that time entirely devoid of photographs, bore little resemblance to that of *Holiday*.

Ogilvy was blessed in finding Ingeborg Baton, a Danish typographer. For a small agency, employing a full-time typographer was

* During one stretch in the 1950s, Ogilvy’s ads plus editorial contributions from his cousin Rebecca West and her son Anthony West accounted for an impressive number of *The New Yorker*’s total pages.

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extraordinary. Ogilvy was very concerned about the appearance of advertisements, and Borgie was key to this endeavor.* She would never comment on the typography until she had read every word of the copy and understood what the writer was trying to say, no matter how long it took. Although he was not a fan of creative awards, Ogilvy did not mind recognition for excellence in layout, art, and typography, boasting that in 1950, the agency ranked behind only the much larger N.W. Ayer and Young & Rubicam, producing six advertisements judged by *Advertising Agency* among their “50 Best.”



Poverty-stricken Puerto Rico, then a territory administered by the United States, presented the next opportunity for the agency to shine. Luis Muñoz-Marín, the governor of Puerto Rico, and his economic ally Teodoro “Teddy” Moscoso told him that unemployment and poverty in their country were appalling, and they desperately needed industry. They had been working to improve conditions in the country; it was Ogilvy’s task to relay that news accurately to the American public, especially for manufacturers. Viewing the mission as a higher calling, Ogilvy threw himself into portraying Puerto Rico as “an island in renaissance.”

He complained he never got credit for what he considered the best advertisement he ever wrote, an all-text, full page (with a coupon) signed by economist Beardsley Ruml outlining the tax advantages of establishing a plant in Puerto Rico. Fourteen thousand potential employers cut out the coupon and mailed it in; many established factories on the island and brought jobs.

One day Ogilvy observed that the program for industrial development was going well, with hundreds of new factories, but if they were not careful, they would turn that lovely island into an industrial park. What do you suggest? asked Moscoso. “Well, my native island Scotland was always regarded as a barbarous place until Rudolph Bing went to Edinburgh and started the Edinburgh Festival. Why don’t you

* One obituary said that calling Baton a typographer was like calling Chippendale a carpenter.

start a festival?” Moscoso made a note in his little diary. Three months later, he persuaded the cellist Pablo Casals to come to live in Puerto Rico and start the Casals Festival of Music. In one ad, instead of showing Pablo Casals just sitting there, playing the cello, which Ogilvy said would have been a “visual bromide,” the photograph showed an empty room, with a cello leaning against a chair. The evocative scene, described by a creative man as “lit by Vermeer,” became a classic.

Ogilvy understood from the start that the underlying problem was the country’s image. A study that he commissioned found that Americans thought of Puerto Rico as dirty, squalid, and unpleasant. Under the guise of promoting tourism, the agency went to work on a campaign to correct that image. Ogilvy’s charge to the creative team was delivered in a telegram, received on location:

WHAT WE NEED IS ABOUT 12 IMMORTAL PHOTOGRAPHS.
THE ADVERTISEMENTS MUST BE BEAUTIFUL, SPIRITUAL, UN-
FORGETTABLE.

He also instructed: “Under no circumstances photograph the firehouse at Ponce,” a gaudy tourist attraction featured on postcards.

Ogilvy became emotionally involved in Puerto Rico, saying that changing the image of a country was “the most important thing he had ever done.” He considered Muñoz-Marín the best client he had ever known and Moscoso an inspiring leader. When their party was returned to power, he wrote: “Dear Governor: Thank God. Yours ever, D.O.”

“David Ogilvy’s knowledgeable influence has turned HOBM into a conspicuously successful medium-sized agency,” reported the trade magazine *Printer’s Ink*, saying he had “become at once the conscience and catalytic agent on Madison Avenue, proving that you need not talk down to the consumer. His place among the great advertising writers of all time is practically assured.” This about a man who had written his first ad only five years earlier.



More paths were leading to Ogilvy’s door. Agencies came with proposals to merge or for him to join them as president. Prospective

clients called. Ogilvy said he turned down 20 new accounts in 1955 alone, including Edsel—now considered a joke, but then the first new car to be introduced since 1938 and lusted for by every advertising agency without a car account. He declined to compete not because of any prescience but because the account would be so large that, if successful, it could dominate the agency; if a failure, it could take the agency down with it.

Revlon came to him twice. “Not on your tintype,” he said. “I won’t go near that son of a bitch [Charles Revson].” He turned down “another SOB” (Louis Rosenstiel of Schenley) twice. “He was a real bad egg.” Now that he could be choosy, Ogilvy decided he would never take an account if he didn’t like the client personally. He told the head of Thom McAn Shoes he was resigning the account because the executive vice president was “a shit” and treating his people atrociously.

Haloid Xerox came to him with the first plain-paper copier. Ogilvy was not interested in an invention he did not understand, even when offered some of its stock. “It’s too small for us,” he said. “Go see my friend Fred Papert. He’s just starting an agency.” Xerox was soon spending \$10 million through Papert, Koenig, Lois, and Fred Papert became wealthy with Xerox stock. “He ought to share it with me,” said Ogilvy. He returned a 50-page questionnaire from the Better Vision Institute with an icy note commenting on the rudeness involved in expecting busy people to fill out lengthy questionnaires, adding: “P.S. What is the Better Vision Institute?” It turned out to be a good client for Doyle Dane Bernbach.

When Hallmark said it was thinking about firing Foote, Cone & Belding and wondered if Ogilvy might be interested. “You must be mad,” he told the huge greeting card company. “They’re doing a marvelous job for you, and have been for years. If there’s anything wrong with the relationship, tell Fax Cone. He’ll put it right.” Hallmark stayed with FCB, except for a brief fling with Ogilvy’s agency many years later.



Lever Brothers arrived in 1957 with two assignments. It was the agency’s first packaged goods account, a real mass-market consumer product sold in supermarkets. Ogilvy’s biggest win so far both in

terms of potential and immediate income, the Lever account put the agency into the major leagues.

For Lever's Good Luck margarine, Ogilvy's Big Idea—totally atypical for a packaged goods product generally promoted on television—was a full-page editorial-format print ad with a provocative headline:

A challenge to women who would never dream of serving margarine—Lever Brothers defy you to tell the difference between GOOD LUCK margarine and you-know-what.

In three long columns of type, the writer talked about trying to persuade his wife to try to tell the difference (“Our consort was *flabbergasted*”) and related how they served it at dinner parties in little French crocks. The advertisement explained the product's nutritional and health benefits, argued that 97 percent of its ingredients came from American farms, and closed with the story of a Greenwich child who ate a quarter of a pound “*straight*.”

Even more startling was his next effort for Good Luck—persuading the former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, still widely admired after the death of Franklin Roosevelt, to appear in a television commercial endorsing the product. She donated her \$35,000 fee to the United Nations. “I'm rather ashamed of that ad,” Ogilvy said later, “because I exploited Mrs. Roosevelt's innocence.” She sold a lot of margarine, even though viewers remembered her and not the product.

With Rinso, the second assignment from Lever, Ogilvy stubbed his toe—twice. The first time was with a magazine advertisement showing 16 common stains (one, he claimed, his own blood) and how to take them out. Perhaps stain removal was the wrong strategy; perhaps the ad should have been on TV; perhaps nothing could have saved the tired old brand. Sales didn't move. Then Ogilvy resorted to an embarrassing jingle to introduce a new synthetic detergent under the famous Rinso soap name: “Rinso White or Rinso Blue? Soap or detergent—it's up to you!” The confused consumer went to the store and bought Tide; the agency lost the Rinso account, its most profitable one.

Ogilvy had a chance to redeem himself with a third assignment from Lever. When he met Dove, it had not been launched. This

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product is unique, the client told him. It is not soap. It is a *detergent*. It is the first “beauty bar” that is neutral—neither acid nor alkaline; that is big news. That is how I want you to advertise it. That evening Ogilvy had some housewives interviewed and exposed the “neutral” promise to them. It left them cold, as he had expected. He informed the client of the results and asked to see the product’s formula. One of the chemists began a long dissertation on the properties of the ingredients, which included stearic acid, the chief ingredient in cold cream.

So was born Ogilvy’s biggest sales idea:

DOVE IS ONE-QUARTER CLEANSING CREAM—IT CREAMS
YOUR SKIN WHILE YOU WASH.

The first magazine ad was hardly sophisticated—a woman in a bathtub talking on the telephone, using an embarrassing pun to deliver her message: “Darling, I’m having the most extraordinary experience. . . . I’m head over heels in Dove.” But the basic idea of one-quarter cleansing cream resulting in softer, less dry skin than washing with soap was insightful and effective beyond anyone’s imagination. Side-by-side face tests demonstrated the difference in magazines. On television, cleansing cream was poured into a plastic Dove-shaped mold. Over the years, the campaign helped grow Dove into the number-one cleansing brand in the world.

When Lever bought time on the most popular TV show of the day, *Have Gun, Will Travel* and the program was recommended (appropriately) for Dove, Ogilvy rejected it out of hand. “You can’t sell Dove on horseback.”



By 1953, the agency had 18 accounts and ranked 58th among U.S. advertising agencies. Among the new accounts were Tetley Tea and Pepperidge Farm breads and cookies, both of which were served at afternoon tea in Ogilvy’s office. Tetley ads were built around the actual Tetley tea taster, Albert Dimes. If the actual head of Schweppes could establish authenticity, why couldn’t its taster do the same for Tetley? The Pepperidge Farm campaign grew from an idea Ogilvy said came

to him in a dream—a grocer delivering baked goods in a horse-drawn wagon, a throwback to his Amish days. Other writers turned “Titus Moody,” a New England Yankee character from the Fred Allen radio show, into the Pepperridge spokesman. Titus, “Howdy, Ma’am,” and old-fashioned goodness went on for years.

Taking on Rolls-Royce in 1960—“over the dead bodies of most of my then partners, who thought that would just fix forever our reputation as being a fancy carriage-trade agency”—was an astute decision. Ogilvy saw it as an opportunity to do remarkable advertising and further burnish the agency’s reputation, doing “something better than Detroit had ever done.”

Ogilvy spent three weeks talking with engineers and reading everything about the car. He said he wrote over 100 headlines and freely admitted that he did not invent his eventual choice but pulled it out of an article that had appeared 20 years earlier: “At 60 Miles an Hour the Loudest Noise in This New Rolls-Royce Comes from the Electric Clock.”* The headline provoked an austere British engineer to note: “We really must do something about our clock.” (Later Ogilvy was told that the same headline had been used in a 1933 ad for the Pierce Arrow, and reported this discovery to Rolls-Royce.)

His long, meticulous text was packed with facts: “The coach is given five coats of primer paint, and hand-rubbed between each coat, before nine coats of finish paint go on.” The Bentley, made by Rolls-Royce but with a different grille, is bestowed with a famously startling adjective: “diffident.” The copy describes the small but important difference: “Except for the radiators, they are identical motor cars, manufactured by the same engineers in the same works. People who feel *diffident* about driving a Rolls-Royce can buy a Bentley.” The ad ran in just two newspapers and two magazines but stimulated more praise than anything the agency had produced. Agency leader Leo Burnett judged it to be not only the best automobile ad but perhaps the best ad of all time. People in the business could recite whole paragraphs verbatim. More important to Ogilvy: “It sold so many cars we dare not run it again. Our client’s production isn’t

* The headline now represents Ogilvy in the *Oxford Book of Quotations*.

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big enough. Just think what would happen if Ford, Chrysler or General Motors hired Ogilvy, Benson & Mather.”

The former Amish farmer now wanted a Rolls-Royce for himself. Page told him, “We just can’t afford a damn Rolls-Royce, and who’s going to drive it? We’d have to pay a chauffeur.” Page prevailed until he took a vacation. “When I got back, there was a Rolls sitting in front of the office with a chauffeur. It was second-hand, 1932 or 1933. A beautiful car.” The license was OBM-2, to suggest there was another. Author Peter Mayle, then a copywriter at the agency, remembers trudging down Fifth Avenue on his way to the office on a hot and humid summer day. A Rolls-Royce pulled up next to him, and Ogilvy put his head out the window. “If you work very hard and are very successful, one day you’ll be able to go to work in a car like this. Don’t be late.” With that, he drove off.

Years later, Ogilvy resigned the account and gave as his reasons pressure from dealers to advertise like Buick, the company’s “scandalous” service, and its tendency to make “lemons.” He reminded the company he had been a miracle worker with a microscopic budget . . . and told them he would continue to drive his “magnificent” Silver Wraith.



Growing fame and the agency’s success emboldened Ogilvy to do what he had long wanted to do: force a confrontation with Hewitt. When they started out, Ogilvy called Hewitt a genius, and Hewitt thought the world of Ogilvy. Now the two were fighting the whole time. Ogilvy complained Hewitt was not working as hard as he was and came to realize they were hopelessly mismatched in style and temperament. Hewitt spent his time drinking martinis with clients. Ogilvy had a more professional view of the nature of the business. He threatened to resign several times, asking other executives whom they would support in a showdown. Finally, he just walked out in frustration and left others to sort things out. Complicating life was the fact that all the profit came from Hewitt’s clients and all the glory and hope of the agency came from Ogilvy’s.

The British partners flew over to patch up the rift but soon concluded they would have to make a choice. In spite of his ingratiating

good nature, Hewitt never had a chance. At the end of the week, the majority owners placed their bets on Ogilvy. Hewitt gave an emotion-packed speech and departed, soon to join Kenyon & Eckhardt. Hewitt's departure clarified the leadership, but he took several people with him and, as expected, the Sunoco and Chase Bank accounts. The split caused a financial and a PR hit. "It was touch and go whether we would survive," said Ogilvy. "I didn't know if the whole thing would go up in smoke." The company remained standing, as Ogilvy, Benson & Mather.

Faced with lingering insecurities about himself and prospects for his agency, Ogilvy started two years of Freudian psychoanalysis, a fashionable thing to do in the 1950s. "Every day for years I thought [the agency] was going to fail. I was always scared sick. I remember saying one day: if this is success, God deliver me from failure." When the psychiatrist told him he had an anal complex and suggested after a number of sessions that it may be time to talk about his attitude toward sex, Ogilvy exclaimed, "You don't expect me to talk about that, do you?" got up, and stalked out.

The cure was found not on a psychiatrist's couch but in *work*. Ogilvy redoubled his efforts, working deep into the night and virtually full time on weekends. Creating campaigns. Hunting new business. And it was all work. He seldom entertained clients, telling them he "worked his guts out" trying to produce good advertising and couldn't do that and take them to the theater as well.

He walked the halls at night, leaving notes telling people to turn out lights and keep the office tidy. ("I feel a little bit like a slum clearance crusader who builds a new development, only to find the tenants keep coal in their new bathtubs.") Confronted by a comment on his own desk piled high with papers, "Tidy desk, tidy mind?" Ogilvy considered the rebuke and responded: "Sterile desk, sterile mind." He exhorted his staff in memos: "Raise your sights. Compete with the Immortals. Blaze new trails. Soak yourself in research. And never stop selling."

He was everywhere, giving interviews and speeches—proposing a National College of Advertising and Marketing, lobbying against billboards, inveighing against "weasel merchants and purveyors of poor taste." His most important speech, to the 4As in Chicago in 1955, injected the concept of brand image into the marketing world.

“I didn’t invent brand image. I pinched it,” Ogilvy volunteered. He took the idea from an article in the *Harvard Business Review* by Burleigh Gardner and Sidney Levy and put it into his own sweeping terms: *Every advertisement is part of the long-term investment in the personality of the brand.* The concept was not entirely new in advertising circles, but after putting the spotlight on it, Ogilvy was dubbed the “apostle of the brand image.” Brands took on greater importance as products themselves became increasingly similar, and branding became central in advertising discussions, eventually entering the language in worlds far removed from marketing.

Ogilvy was becoming something of a cheerleader for a business that had been seen by some as not altogether respectable. “When Ogilvy talks about advertising, he gives it a dignity it has rarely had in this country,” commented the trade magazine *Madison Avenue*. “He strips it of the phony, shell-game, patent-medicine-spieler aura. ‘Tell the truth,’ he says over and over again.” The agency was winning so much new business, Ogilvy could afford to be selective; he turned down 50 clients in 1957.

In 1957, Vance Packard’s book *The Hidden Persuaders* delved into the ways that advertising bypasses consumers’ rational minds. Ogilvy, said Packard, created “a highly successful nonrational symbol for an obscure brand of shirt—a mustached man with a black eye patch.” The book became notorious for its view that “many of us are being influenced and manipulated—far more than we realize.”

Surprisingly, Ogilvy seemed to jump on the bandwagon with a piece for *Harper’s Magazine*, “A Hidden Persuader Confesses.” His confession, however, contained little that he had ever hidden. In the article, Ogilvy “confessed” that he learned that selling is a *serious* business from his days selling door to door.

You push the door-bell. The housewife opens up—not very wide. You stick your foot in the door and start selling. You don’t stand there and sing at her; she would think you were a lunatic. You don’t stand there and clown. So today I eschew singing commercials on TV. So today I never write humorous copy in advertisements. You talk to the housewife personally, as a human being, and you tell her what your product would do for her. So too in advertising.

Harper’s turned down his article; clients bought his pitch.



Despite his reputation for creative brilliance, some feel that the best ad Ogilvy ever wrote was not the Hathaway eye patch but an agency “house” ad under the headline “How to run an advertising agency,” propounding leadership principles that apply to almost any business. People were still requesting reprints ten years after it ran. Never content with just writing ads, Ogilvy’s larger goal was to create an enduring institution. Although he said he had studied every book on advertising, that wasn’t the way he would learn management. He would go to the smartest people and pick their brains.

“In the 1950s, four men were independently trying to build professional service firms linking theory with practicality—Marvin Bower of McKinsey, David Ogilvy, Leonard Spacek of Arthur Andersen, and Gus Levy of Goldman Sachs,” writes Elizabeth Ederheim Haas in her biography of Bower. “They would frequently lunch at The University Club and compare notes on their common ambition.” Bower and Ogilvy were particularly close. They shared philosophies, spoke of each other as role models, encouraged each other in breaking new ground, and shared an “unremitting drive to achieve excellence,” says Haas. “Inside both McKinsey and Ogilvy & Mather, everybody from the boardroom to the mailroom knew and understood what the firms’ values were, what the mission was, and ‘the way things are done here.’”

Ogilvy studied management at Bower’s feet, even admiring his attention to writing. “It is said that if you send an engraved wedding invitation to my friend Marvin Bower, the great man of McKinsey, he will return it to you—with revisions.” One such opportunity arose when Ogilvy drafted his statement of purposes for the agency, starting with “earn an increased profit every year,” and sent it to Bower for comment. “Marvin gave me holy hell. He said that any service business that gave higher priority to profits than serving its clients deserved to fail.” Years later, Ogilvy was thrilled to be invited to address the McKinsey partners, and opened his talk by relating a ditty from his youth:

Who takes care of the caretaker’s daughter
When the caretaker’s busy taking care?

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I have always wondered who management consultants consult. Now I know. You consult *me*, that's who.

Ogilvy was serious in taking principles of how to run a professional services organization directly from Bower. McKinsey in turn devoted several Saturday training sessions to talking about Ogilvy's philosophy and how it compared to McKinsey's.

By the end of the decade, Ogilvy was starting to build a corporate culture, although that term had not yet come into vogue. Dazzled as a youth by the red of his rich aunt's chic household, Ogilvy adopted the color for the agency, first in his own office and then throughout the office halls. "It felt like the House of Lords after the dingy precincts of other agencies I'd inhabited," says a former copywriter. The culture was communicated in many small signals, some captured in a Welcome booklet for new employees. There were sections on tidiness (nothing on tops of file cabinets), customs (writing the word "percent" rather than using the % sign), and courtesy (answer your own phone.) Also, "Paper clips are dangerous. When they are used to fasten papers together they frequently pick up papers which don't belong. Staples or bulldog clips are much safer and more efficient."

Ogilvy was building the culture as much by personal example as by philosophy. In 1959, the *Play of the Week*, a cultural icon on television, was at risk of being canceled. Broadcast on Channel 13, New York's public television station, the show offered high-quality theater week after week—plays by O'Neill, Steinbeck, Sartre, with top talent. But the ratings were predictably low, and sponsors were dropping out.

Ogilvy was looking for a television opportunity for his client Standard Oil (New Jersey), the second biggest industrial company in the world, doubly attractive because it was headed by Monroe (Mike) Rathbone, a friend. They worked well together. Now they had a chance to do a good thing together. Rathbone wanted a program that would reflect Jersey's own high standards and was not about to share the stage with TV spots for yogurts, bras, and denture cleansers. Ogilvy agreed and told the producers at Channel 13 he thought he could find a single company to underwrite the whole program—but *only* the whole program.

People at the agency and at Channel 13 went to work to persuade the few remaining underwriters to swap their spots for another program or simply cancel, so the show could go on. Company after company and agency after agency responded favorably—with one exception. Lennen & Newell had bought one or two spots for the P. Lorillard Tobacco Company and balked, arguing that they had made a good buy, their sole responsibility was to their client, and they would hold Channel 13 to its contract.

Ogilvy stepped in, calling a Lennen & Newell executive he knew. He went through the history of the project and launched every argument he could think of, including an appeal to public spirit: It was “in the national interest” that *Play of the Week* should survive. The executive said he could not interfere and hung up. The program appeared to be doomed. Ogilvy sat for a moment, picked up the phone, and got the Lennen & Newell man back on the line.

“Go to your chairman immediately. Tell him that our agency will pay Lennen & Newell all the commission that will accrue from *Play of the Week* sponsorship over the next two years. I will wait for your answer.”

Within five minutes, the executive was back. “You’ve got a deal.”

Gone were protestations of representing Lennen & Newell’s client interests. Gone were arguments about the value of the spots. Gone was any semblance of honor for their agency. But *Play of the Week* survived, its rescue front-page news in *The New York Times*. *Life* magazine said if there were a Congressional Medal for business, it should go to Standard Oil. The *New York Post* credited the decisive role to Ogilvy, saying his heroic save would “enshrine him in the hearts of the literate public at which he has often aimed his commercial arrows.” The tone was set at the top.

Ogilvy developed such a reputation for personal integrity that the industry newsletter *The Gallagher Report*, which made a practice of assigning nicknames to agency leaders who appeared regularly in its columns, crowned him “Honest David.”

Ogilvy’s exposure to Bower and McKinsey reinforced his concept of making advertising a *profession*, with principles and a “corpus of knowledge.” Principles were communicated in speeches and memos, institutionalized in presentations, stressed in training, and

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dramatized in quirky flourishes like the Russian matryoshka dolls, which directors found at their places at a board meeting. Opening the painted, nesting dolls, each smaller than the one before, every director found the same message typed on a piece of paper inside the tiniest doll:

If you hire people who are smaller than you are, we shall become a company of dwarfs.

If you hire people who are bigger than you are, we shall become a company of giants.

Hire Big People, people who are better than you, Ogilvy demanded. “Pay them more than you pay yourself if necessary.” Russian dolls became part of the culture.

So did Ogilvy’s penchant for eccentric terminology. Region directors were “Barons.” Group creative directors were “Syndicate Heads.” Bright stars with management potential were “Crown Princes” whose careers should be developed. At the other end of the spectrum were “barnacles,” who were not contributing or were past their prime and had to be scraped to keep the ship moving. Scraped by others, not by Ogilvy, who was better in principle than in practice when it came to scraping any individual barnacle. When one such barnacle was named to the board (at Ogilvy’s insistence), a director commented, “At Ogilvy, when the music stops, we add chairs.”

He issued a directive to recruit “high-flyers.” “Hot creative people don’t come around looking for jobs; they have to be rooted out like truffles, by trained pigs. Do our trained pigs do any rooting? I don’t think so.” To further the image of professionalism, Ogilvy referred to his executives as “partners.”

Following McKinsey’s commitment to training its people, he used the metaphor of a “teaching hospital.”

Great hospitals do two things: They look after patients, and they teach young doctors.

Ogilvy & Mather does two things: We look after clients, and we teach young advertising people.

Ogilvy & Mather is the teaching hospital of the advertising world. And, as such, to be respected above all other agencies.

Training was made important, to indoctrinate *everyone* in what the agency believed about creating advertising and treating people. Programs were created at every level and every discipline—new employees, mid-level, heads of offices, creative, media, and so on. After the entry level, training was positioned as a *privilege* rather than a duty—one had to get good evaluations to be admitted. Ogilvy personally attended every training program he could—if he didn't have to fly. He toyed with the idea of starting a school of advertising at the postgraduate level and proposed paying the tuition of employees who took courses in advertising at places like Harvard Business School.

On the advice of his banker grandfather, he adopted J. P. Morgan's policies of only "first class business, and that in a first class way" and "gentlemen with brains" as guiding principles for his agency.



Ogilvy was also honing his advertising philosophy.

Content is more important than technique: "What you say is more important than how you say it." Remember the image of the brand. Offer the reader some reward in return for her time and attention. Include the brand name in the headline. No "blind and dumb" headlines that require reading the body copy to be comprehensible. Words that "sell." "What you show [in TV] is more important than what you say." Most important: "Unless your campaign is built around a BIG IDEA, it will be second rate. Once you decide on the direction of your campaign, play it loud and clear. Don't compromise. Be strong. Don't beat about the bush. GO THE WHOLE HOG."

Ogilvy had built a strong team of talented writers and art directors, attracted by the agency's sparkling work and his winning personality. By the late 1950s, he was writing very little advertising himself. "For a short period in my life, maybe ten years at the outside, I was close to being a genius. Then it ran out."

His energy was going into the pursuit of new business. He saw his employees as hungry little birds in a nest, waiting beaks open for him to drop a worm down.

At a presentation for KLM, in front of eight people from each side, Ogilvy said, "My people, go home," made the case himself, and won the account. With the Rayon Manufacturers Association, which

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had given each agency exactly 15 minutes to make its case before ringing a bell, he asked how many of the 12 people present would be involved in the agency decision. "Why, all of us." And how many will be involved in approving the advertising?" The 12 members of Committee, representing 12 manufacturers. "Ring the bell," said Ogilvy, and walked out. To make presentations for the Greyhound Bus account, he and Herb Strauss of Grey took the train to San Francisco—why they didn't take the bus is another question. By the second day, they couldn't stand the suspense and agreed to show each other their campaigns. Before the presentation, Ogilvy called the Greyhound advertising manager. "I've seen Herb's work. I know mine. He deserves to get your account," he stated. With that, he went back to New York.

Nothing was left to chance. "Don't lean back. Lean in," Ogilvy counseled people on how they should sit while he was presenting. "Because your body is coming in, you're interested. Whether you've heard this presentation twice is immaterial." He made lists of targets, sent mailings, cultivated leads, investigated prospects, tailored presentations, worried over details, humanized introductions of his executives, and presented his agency's work as the actor he was, using every ounce of his charm.

To win an assignment from Armstrong Cork, the Scotsman wangled an invitation from the Donegal Society to speak from the pulpit of an old Presbyterian church near the Armstrong factory, knowing its chairman, Hening Prentice, would be in the congregation. Ogilvy sang the praises of "Scotland, my native country" and recognized the Scottish Prentice, "an industrialist who has contributed so much to the prosperity and culture of Lancaster County." The agency won the ceiling tile account but lost it a few years later. "You've come to fire us," said Ogilvy when the bearer of bad news came. "You're right. We didn't do a good job for you."

As in the early days, not every client had to be a moneymaker. He took on the \$60,000 Steuben Glass account, knowing it would lose money, offering five reasons: It was a leader in its industry, it would do no harm for the agency to build "a portfolio of thoroughbreds," the advertising would be read by heads of corporations who bought Steuben products for their own personal use, Steuben was a subsidiary of Corning Glass (a target), and "the Steuben office is only one block away from ours."

As it grew, the agency moved twice to larger quarters—first up Madison Avenue near Fifty-seventh Street, then in 1954, to 589 Fifth Avenue (known by the side-street address of its entrance, 2 East Forty-eighth Street).^{*} Ogilvy's spacious ninth-floor office had windows and an outside terrace along one wall, a counter and corkboard (to display ads) on the opposite side, with a private bathroom off to the side. He sat behind a large, traditional desk at the far end. Visitors had to cross an expanse of red carpet to reach him. At the near end, above a red leather couch, was an Act of Parliament clock. Ogilvy liked telling how it got its name: When Parliament voted a tax on watches, the canny Scots retaliated by not carrying watches, and obliging innkeepers installed large, tax-free clocks on pub walls. "My biggest problem is finding time to do everything," he said. "The clock is to remind visitors that time is passing and they must pass along too."



One weekend in 1957, Ogilvy went to a house party with Melinda and, in a characteristically impulsive, romantic, exciting, thoughtless act, left on Sunday with another man's wife. His 18-year marriage had been coming apart, and now he was smitten again. A friend commented that David and Rosser Reeves married two of the great Southern ladies, and treated them both badly. Ogilvy divorced Melinda and married Anne Cabot that same year. Melinda, who always adored him, never remarried.

Anne Flint Cabot was beautiful and intelligent; some remember her glamorous photograph in *Life* magazine. Ogilvy described her as a real all-American girl. Telling people he had married Anne Cabot was not exactly accurate, said a friend. "He married Anne Flint, who happened to marry Tom Cabot. But he liked everybody to feel he had married a Cabot from Boston."

The newly married Ogilvys moved to New York City with Anne's three young children, buying a remodeled brownstone at 521 East Eighty-fourth Street, near Gracie Square, a few steps from the Chapin School, where her daughters would be enrolled. The three-story

^{*} Where it remained until 1989.

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house was furnished with English and Portuguese antiques. Anne was a very good cook, and the Ogilvys entertained in a large eat-in French-type kitchen (there was no dining room) that led out to a small backyard. Beautiful copper pans lined the stripped-down brick walls. “You let your wife do the cooking?” his client Helena Rubinstein asked in astonishment when she came to dinner.

After dinner, guests moved to the living room, some sitting on the staircase, to watch Ogilvy’s favorite film, *The 20th Century*—a documentary narrated by his neighbor Walter Cronkite, with documentary footage of Sarah Bernhardt, Emperor Franz Joseph, Rodin, and Renoir. Ogilvy showed it so often the film finally wore out.

Living next door, Cronkite said he often heard noises in the adjoining wall as he tried to read. Little bumps, like a small animal, but he couldn’t determine the source and never saw a mouse. The first night he and his wife were invited to dinner, Ogilvy knocked his pipe on the mantel to get the ashes out. “It was a revelation,” said Cronkite. “I realized the noise was not an animal—unless you consider him one.”

Ogilvy said he walked to work every day, 36 blocks, partly through Central Park. Well, maybe not every day. Cronkite would stand at the window with the curtains drawn. When he saw Ogilvy come out, he would emerge and hope to be offered a ride in the Rolls-Royce. “It didn’t work all the time, and I think he caught on after a while, but I did get to ride in that magnificent car. I was pretty impressed.”

After his early rush of creativity, Ogilvy took to referring to himself as an “extinct volcano.” He may not have been erupting, but he still gave off plenty of heat. He continued to work very hard, taking home two stuffed briefcases. He often left the theater between acts and returned to the office, leaving Anne to get home on her own. “It used to boil Anne,” recalls one colleague. Says another, “He was very short-tempered, very focused and totally obsessed with one thing—this advertising agency.”

Was he doing it for recognition, fame, a sense of accomplishment? “Many of the greatest creations of man have been inspired by the desire to make money,” Ogilvy said. “If Oxford undergraduates were paid for their work, I would have performed miracles of scholarship. It wasn’t until I tasted lucre on Madison Avenue that I began

to work in earnest.” He was administering a staff of 120, going to six meetings a day, occasionally writing copy (“a slow, laborious job”), and at the beck and call of 18 “hydra-headed” clients. “I work from nine in the morning until midnight, seven days a week,” he wrote. “I have no time or strength for any private activity. I haven’t read a book, gone to a concert, been to a party, or written to a relation for five years.”

By the late 1950s, when he was in his late 40s, Ogilvy had come up with most of what he would later count as his Big Ideas, which he defined as campaigns that ran for 20 or more years, like Hathaway, Pepperidge Farm, and Dove. One of his favorites ran just once: “LOST—MY DOG TEDDY. Looks like Lassie.” The publicity—it attracted newspapers as far away as Latin America—was amazing. He called it a Big Idea as it got his dog back.

Of all his ideas, the biggest—or at least the most preposterous—was the notion that he could run an advertising agency in America. Here Ogilvy describes himself as of the day he started the agency:

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

The moral: “It sometimes pays an agency to be imaginative and unorthodox in hiring.”

