

'Weekend' super hype falls flat



Lynn Orr

It isn't enough that we have to be inundated with ridiculous advertising radiating from television and radio, we have to be inundated with ridiculous puffery championing the puffery.

It isn't enough that these advertising wizards tried to persuade the nation that this particular brew marks the imbibing with an elite status; now they're going to try to persuade the imbibers that the brew will lift their social status any day of the week.

At the same time a few Americans are fighting a losing war against alcoholism, they have to contend with advertising that sends a message of "New York-style" or "California-style" guzzling of that truly elite brew.

So how come I'm picking on Michelob when there are so many other ridiculous ad campaigns to take on?

THIS ONE not only had the nerve to cross my desk at a bad time, it also had the effrontery to include such phrases as "consumer awareness" and

such sentences as: "The new campaign brings an energy and expansiveness to Michelob that is more in keeping with America in the 1980s."

New energy for the 1980s might be nice, but how can a depressant, such as beer, instill energy? The statement is the kind of paradox that gets you wondering about who wrote it.

Michelob's advertisers — D'Arcy, MacManus & Masius — credit their "weekend" campaign for making Michelob the seventh largest-selling beer in the U.S. and the country's dominant "super premium" beer.

Not discounting the fact that other "super premium" beers haven't challenged that claim, why spend the money for a new campaign?

Were the advertisers convinced that the "new energy" of the '80s might elicit a change in the habit of beer drinkers? Instead of struggling through a week at work to get to that wonderful weekend with Michelob, beer lovers might simply decide that they enjoyed working (that good ol' Protestant ethic rearing its nose-to-the-grindstone head).

If they decided they enjoyed weekdays at work as much as they enjoyed weekends with Michelob, they might get the crazy notion that the "super premium" beer had little to do with their happiness.

Or maybe the creative genius behind this campaign had a premonition that four years of weekend Michelob might get the same treatment that four years of Jimmy Carter incurred.



A seven-day weekend "AI Hirt-style."

IN A NEW age of promised prosperity, "Super premium" beer goes weekdays" probably sounded like a surefire gimmick. But the advertising geniuses might have gone astray here.

A few studies have shown that three-day and four-day weekends aren't exactly doing too well at the polls: They're too expensive.

Maybe that's the fault of that "super premium" beer on the weekends.

shop talk/

Sandra Armbruster

Farm work pays more than wages for state youth

They just don't understand. I'm talking about the city slickers in the Michigan Department of Labor (MDL).

Apparently the MDL thinks that all farmers are just a bunch of country bumpkins who can't manage their own affairs. Horsefeathers!

You see, the MDL is recommending that its own farm youth safety standards be adopted instead of the federal guidelines. That, says a Michigan State University safety specialist, would practically prevent 16- and 17-year-olds from doing productive farm work.

That proposal follows five hearings last spring on the subject.

"Those five hearings resulted in 498 pages of testimony and 263 items of correspondence that were 100 percent against the MDL proposal," said MSU's Richard G. Pfister.

Opposition to the proposal came not only from farmers, parents and youths, but also from agricultural safety experts, including the labor department's agricultural labor commission, according to an MSU news release.

Pfister believes those state standards would keep Michigan "among the states with the highest youth unemployment rates in the nation."

UNDOUBTEDLY, the labor dudes have some real concerns about safety. But farm folks aren't yokels who disregard the safety of their young.

Farmers have feelings, too. They do love their kids. Parents also need help with the farmwork. And kids need to earn a little dough.

Work teaches kids things about responsibility, proper job attitudes and handling money. Earnings also help keep kids out of their parents' pocket-books.

Maybe if more city kids got off their duffs to do a little more work, they'd get into a little less trouble.

Right now I live in a real city of about 80,000 people. I used to live in a rural township where garbage was picked up once every two weeks and where the school system should have been placed out at the curb, if there had been any.

There are reasons for living in the city, like good schools, libraries, opportunities, challenges, neighborhood stores, roads and services.

But there are things about working on a farm that city life can never teach you.

WE SHARED a three-acre farm, if you can call three acres a farm, with a couple dozen chickens and two cows. The cows were only temporary, since they ended up in the freezer.

My son earned 25 cents a week at the age of 3 for collecting the eggs each day. Now, I'm not looking to be turned in for violating child labor laws.

I just want you to know about some of the things we both learned from the experience. Things like where not to step. And how you never turn your back on a cow and then bend over.

But we also learned about caring for other living things — things that sometimes are so fragile they get sick and die for no apparent reason.

And sometimes farm work includes doing things so special that no safety standard should prevent a youngster from experiencing what earnings from any other job could never compensate for missing.

Things like the feeling you get reaching for a warm egg from a nest for Sunday breakfast.

The MDL is scheduling another hearing on farm youth employment at 10 a.m. Dec. 4 in the Old Baker West Building, rooms 1 B&C, Michigan Department of Health complex, 45000 Logan Street, Lansing. Written comments should be mailed to the Wage Hour Division, Department of Labor, State Secondary Complex, Second Floor, B-Wing, 7150 Harris Drive, Lansing 48909.

Marching to the Pentagon's tune

If the Pentagon wants our sons or daughters, it should be prepared to handle them with care and loyalty.

Exposing soldiers to radiation and toxic herbicides isn't the way to attract new members to the modern Army.

Soldiers were purposefully exposed to the radiation of exploding atomic bombs in the 1950s. American GIs in Vietnam were forced to live with the herbicide Agent Orange through the 1960s and '70s.

In both cases, those involved claimed that the government failed to pay sufficient attention to the health damage caused by the exposure to radiation or the herbicide.

It was not that the Pentagon was unaware of the dangers of radiation when it marched thousands of soldiers close to the Nevada atomic bomb tests. The radiation threat demonstrated by the Hiroshima bomb horrified people.

American medical personnel arrived in that Japanese city about a month after the bomb was dropped in the summer of 1945.

By then the population already was showing the effects of toxic radiation. They were bleeding from the mouth and rectum and dying suddenly with strange spots on their bodies. The expression "bomb disease" entered the Japanese vocabulary.

BUT EVIDENTLY the government wanted more information on radiation. That's why some of the soldiers who were marched close to the Nevada atomic explosions now refer to themselves as guinea pigs.

In 1979, Time magazine looked back at the situation: "Almost every time the old Atomic Energy Commission was asked by the military to permit troops closer to ground zero or increase their radiation exposure, the AEC ignored its own safety standards and acquiesced."

On March 1952, the Pentagon asked that its men be able to move closer to the test than the AEC wanted, placing them within four miles of the blast.

In October 1952, Time said the Pentagon was asking the AEC to raise the level of ionizing radiation the soldiers could receive.

That scarcely sounds like an army that believes in protecting its men.



Sherry Kahan

IN 1970, THE PENTAGON announced it was banning use of Agent Orange in Vietnam because it posed "imminent danger" to women in childbearing years. That's particularly interesting considering the U.S. government did not ban use of Agent Orange in that country until last year. Even then the ban was termed a temporary one and excluded rice fields and grazing lands.

As those millions of tons of defoliants drifted down on Vietnam, U.S. troops were underneath. Today those troops claim this contact is causing everything from blackouts and psychological disorders to cancer and birth defects in their children.

Jim Dries, a former resident of Redford Township who once was a carrier for this paper, was one of those servicemen in Vietnam who looked up and saw the spraying. However, he has felt no ill effects.

"To find out now it was heavily contaminated with long-term poisons is upsetting," says Dries, who is head of the Washtenaw Committee of Vietnam Era Veterans.

Agent Orange contains dioxin, which is regarded as one of the most deadly of substances. Back in 1962, Rachel Carson warned in "Silent Spring" that one of its components could damage chromosomes.

"Nobody argues about the toxicity of this poison," says Harvard professor Dr. Matthew Meselson. He added that it is beginning to be regarded as the most powerful carcinogen known.

Soldiers involved with Agent Orange found it difficult at first to get the attention of the Veterans Administration. (Those exposed to the atomic blasts have been having similar troubles.) Local vets held a rally in Hines Park to complain about lack of information about the herbicide and the slow receipt of benefits.

Michigan vets rallied in August at the VA hospital in Ann Arbor for longer testing hours. As a result, the hospital held a series of Saturday clinics for these men.

"For more than a year we have been offering a physical to all Vietnam veterans who feel they have some exposure to Agent Orange," said hospital spokeswoman June Weltman. Results will be sent to the VA data base in Washington to be used as part of an epidemiological study of Agent Orange, she added.

DRIES SAYS he's satisfied with the Ann Arbor VA hospital's handling of people requesting appointments. However, Tom Hoiles, president of Michigan Association of Concerned Vets, had a complaint about the VA hospital in Battle Creek.

"They told a vet, 'You don't have it,'" he said. Yet the test involved "only a urinalysis and blood test."

As a counselor at Battle Creek Community College, Hoiles has counseled some of these Agent Orange vets.

"I've never seen anything more debilitating to a man than the possibility that he has been exposed to Agent Orange," he said. "No one can tell him anything. Do the blackouts he's been having mean a brain tumor? Will his children be born deformed? Is his deformed child his fault?"

What the Agent Orange vets are asking is that adequate testing and medical service be provided for them with known symptoms, he explained.

"Some vets have been unable to work because of their exposure," he noted. "They need some way to maintain their families. They want the same things given to the wounded in the war."

Arguments will continue about who is to blame. Chemical companies like Dow of Midland, which made the components of the herbicide, says the Pentagon is to blame. The Pentagon claims more tests are needed to establish why the men are sick.

Meanwhile, if the Pentagon wants to have any kind of a decent image with men and women it hopes to recruit, it should look after those men who would probably not be sick today had they not been in the service.

An 'inside' view of the Blundix brouhaha

In recent weeks the reading and viewing public has been inundated with stories about a Southfield-based corporation, its 42-year-old president and a 29-year-old female executive.

Although the story has been told, and told, we offer a new perspective, from an inside source who was on hand for the crucial decisions in this saga. Following is an interview with Fred Flack, former director of corporate public relations for Blundix Corp.

Q. Mr. Flack, it appears that the publicity over Blundix, its president and his relationship with a woman executive has abated. Do you think the publicity has helped or hurt the corporation's image?

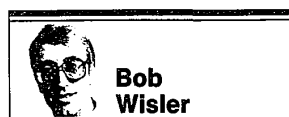
A. In keeping with the forthright, open, candid style of our dynamic young president, Mr. William Hazez, I would have to say that the whole experience was the worst public relations disaster since Dita Beard, ITT and Howard Hunt met in a hospital room.

Q. Very candid, but are there no benefits to the company?

A. Well, most people still think we make washing machines. The business world corporate leaders are laughing their ledgers off. Mr. Hazez will now have to work harder than ever and the entire organization is wondering whether we are going to be on "Soap."

Q. How did this come about?

Q. It goes back to our corporate quest for dynamic young executives who have the energy, vision, daring and intelligence to take Blundix from being a narrowly specialized company into a technocratic giant. As a consequence, we hired a young woman who had all these qualities. Unfortunately, she happened to be a knockout. If you know what I mean.



Bob Wisler

Q. So what?

A. Well, when it became necessary for this president and this, er, woman executive to spend days and evenings and conventions together, other executives felt jealous and wrote poison pen letters to local newspapers. But Mr. Hazez had a solution.

Q. Which was?

A. Forthright, candid openness with our employees and the newspapers. This was against the advice of the Old Guard which advocated the old way of doing things — clandestine, corporate silence about everything except the profit and loss statement.

Q. What is usually advised?

A. The best comment is to answer a different question than the one being asked. Frankly, however, I thought a speculative, rumor-filled story about a company president and a woman vice president was too sensational to attract much attention from the traditional news media and at best the story would last no longer than a day or two.

Q. What happened?

A. The story dragged on for weeks. All the local newspapers and local television stations carried it, as did the New York Times, Washington Post,

Newsweek, Time and the National Lampoon.

Q. Why do you think that was?

A. Well, everyone claimed that they were writing about the problems of women executives in general and how this case constituted the tip of the iceberg in the unending quest for women executives to make headway in the chauvinistic corporate world.

Q. What do you think?

A. We were the only company in the U.S. with a candid, open policy and a 29-year-old executive who is also a blond knockout.

Q. What happened after the publicity?

A. The woman executive decided that rumor, speculation and innuendo, as well as the attitude of the board of directors, made her ineffective and she resigned. The Old Guard is mollified. Mr. Hazez is distraught and I am out of a job.

Q. Why are you out of a job?

A. For not advising everyone of the true nature of corporate publicity and for not muzzling the forthright, candid, open style of presidency when you have a 29-year-old blond knockout vice president.

Q. You don't seem upset.

A. No. The new corporate policy, which is the old corporate policy — "Never complain, never explain, never get on the front page, never let the troops know what is really going on and no more knockouts in the executive suite" — is not my liking. Besides, I have a \$200,000 contract to write a television pilot. It's patterned after "Dallas" and concerns this conglomerate and its dynamic 42-year-old president who has a young woman executive. It has this great character named J.R. Blumenthal who is the former head of the company. . . .