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'Advertising is merely an economical way to sell. It's far cheaper than sending a salesperson to every home in America.'

— W.B. "Brod" Doner



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By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

Likeable advertising sells. With that simple philosophy, W.B. "Brod" Doner has sustained an empire that stretches far beyond company headquarters in Southfield. As Doner, of Birmingham, marks his 50th anniversary in business this month, his agency — eight offices and 500 employees in the United States and Canada — is producing \$275 million annually, hawking everything from pickles to beer.

When Doner moves his home base this summer — 27½ employees occupying the sixth floor of an office building on Northwestern Highway — it won't be far — just across the highway to the Macabees building where floor space will be double.

It's then that Doner, 72, plans to celebrate his half century in the advertising business. Except for an Aircraft Club luncheon honoring him Friday, when he also received proclamations from the governor and mayors of Southfield and Detroit, it has been business as usual for Doner, who founded his agency March 1, 1937.

"I'm proudest of the high quality

of creative work we do," said Doner. "Fifteen to 20 individual ads punctuate my whole career. It's what I'm here for."

CLIENTS INCLUDE Klondike ice cream bars, Chiquita bananas, Snack Time foods, TV Time popcorn, Fygo pop, Little Caesar's pizza — what Doner calls non-serious foods.

"We do things that are fun," said Doner, an affable, low-key executive who still puts in 50-hour weeks and who enjoys the anonymity of advertising. "We get things done in a fun way. Likeable advertising sells."

The 100-plus client list also includes hospitals, supermarkets, appliance stores and the Department of Interior "Save Our Lands/Save Our Parks" campaign, wherein Clint Eastwood tersely tells viewers, "Don't mess with our parks."

Nationally, W.B. Doner & Co. is the 43rd largest advertising agency and the largest in the Detroit market without an automotive account. Doner would like an automotive account; he just hasn't been asked — yet.

"Eliminate subsidiaries, and we'd probably be 30th in size," Doner said. "Campbell Ewald, for example,

50 years of advertising:

Doner on Doner

is part of Inter Public."

Merger is not in Doner's future.

"We aren't interested in that sort of thing. We've had many suitors. Most of the top 10 agencies have approached us. Independence has a lot to do with the caliber of work that we do."

THAT WORK includes public ser-

vice spots ranging from the Detroit Institute of Art's "You gotta have art" promotion to the nationally acclaimed "200 stars" TV spot, responsible for increasing attendance at the Detroit Zoo by almost 20 percent. A recent campaign — newspaper and direct mail only — for the Michigan Humane Society raised \$250,000-\$300,000.

Doner's personal favorite philanthropy is the Multiple Sclerosis Society, with which he has been affiliated for 40 years. He is a director of both the national and international MS organizations.

Drawing on five decades in the advertising industry, Doner addressed these issues:

Does advertising encourage materialism?

Of course. We live in a capitalistic society wherein people strive to acquire things and convenience and status. Advertising is merely an economical way to sell. It's far cheaper than sending a salesperson to every home in America. But advertising is also a reliable source of information. It also sells many non-material things — pay taxes on time, save money through treasury bonds, register to vote, say no to drugs. But for high purpose or material purpose, advertising stands four square with the media — radio, TV, billboards, magazines and newspapers. In fact, most places in the world where there is no freedom of the press, there is no advertising.

Does advertising contribute to al-

cohol and tobacco use among the young by portraying drinking and smoking as things to do?

Yes, it does. But these are not illegal commodities. Alcohol in moderation and some forms of tobacco such as cigars are not injurious. As advertising of these substances is unacceptable to your newspaper? Proliferate consumption of anything, including food, is reprehensible.

Should condoms be advertised?

Of course they should. It's protection of the public.

What products, if any, would you refuse to promote?

Tobacco. It's dangerous to your health. The real hypocrisy is in allowing them (cigarettes) to be sold at all.

Is being headquartered in the Midwest a problem in securing national accounts?

New York is very provincial. But in recent years the reputation of non-New York agencies is growing tremendously. Many advertisers come here — Standard Oil, Snack Time. It's very gratifying.

Memories of hard times linger

Even though the state's unemployment rate has dropped from 17 percent in 1981 to 8 percent today, many Michigan residents believe that unemployment and other economic issues are the most important problems facing the state.

The lingering effect of economic hard times surfaced in a study called Michigan '87 released by Casey Communications Management of Southfield, following a poll of 500 Michigan adults. Interviewing and tabulation were conducted by Nordhaus Research of Southfield.

More than half (55 percent) of the state's residents agree with the statement that there are "hundreds of thousands of formerly employed people in Michigan who will never be employed again." Concern about this issue is particularly high among Democrats and residents of Wayne County.

"This is a stark appraisal of the state's current economic environment," said Jack Casey, president of Casey Communications. "Concern about the state's loss of jobs continues to be nearly as strong today as it was in the early '80s when Michigan was in deep recession."

Forty percent of those polled believe unemployment is the most important problem facing the state. Another 19 percent said that other economic issues — the loss of automotive jobs, a

decrease in the state's industrial activity, a need to broaden Michigan's economic base and foreign competition — are the most important issues.

STILL, 38 percent who are employed outside the home are less concerned about their job security than they were a year ago. Thirty-two percent are more concerned and 28 percent say they are concerned "about the same" as they were a year ago.

Concern about job security runs high among automotive households. Minorities, residents with income under \$25,000 and Wayne County residents also show strong concern about job security. These same groups, as well as union members, express the greatest worry about being laid off or fired from their jobs.

About half of the respondents said they believed the nation's economy is better than five years ago, and 41 percent believe that the state economy is better than five years ago.

But they are somewhat pessimistic about the state's economy in the year ahead. One-fourth believe the state's economy will improve in the next year, one-third said it will stay the same and one-third said things will get worse.

In another issue, 90 percent believe there is a major drug problem among workers today. For-

ty-three percent favor drug testing for all industries or professions while 39 percent favored drug testing for at least certain industries or professions. Seventeen percent opposed mandatory drug testing altogether.

"Michigan residents see drug use as having a negative effect on the work force," said Dave White, Casey Communications vice president. "The numbers indicate that the public is beginning to accept the idea of drug testing of employees."

Heading the list of employees those interviewed thought should be tested were airline pilots with 99 percent in agreement. They were followed by paid drivers (95 percent), police officers (90 percent) and health care professionals (83 percent).

THE CASEY SURVEY also shows:

- That state residents are not expecting tax reform to result in easier tax preparation with 62 percent of those polled expecting to seek tax preparation help compared with 53 percent who said they sought it in the past.
- That state health care earns high marks but is too expensive with physicians and insurance companies responsible for the high cost.

The survey was designed under the supervision of Janet Weiss, director of research services.

Area engineering firms honored

Several area firms were winners of the Consulting Engineers Council of Michigan design competition.

Giulio Hoyem Basso of Troy received the 1987 Eminent Conceptor for Engineering Excellence award for the Michigan State University Plant and Soil Sciences Building in East Lansing. The building features facilities for the departments of crop and soil sciences and horticulture and consists of a six-

level main building, a headhouse and greenhouse complex.

Criteria used in judging the project were achieving the owner's needs, originality, complexity of project, social/economic significance and technical value to the engineering profession.

The firm also won a merit award for its design of the CBS/Fox Video Operations Center in Livonia, the first facility built specifically for


home video manufacturing and duplication.

Hubbel, Roth & Clark of Bloomfield Township won an Honorable Conceptor award for the Ford Motor Co. Ulca Trim Plant plant waste treatability study. The company also designed and assembled a pilot plant that demonstrated the treatment

Livonia won an Honorable Conceptor award for its engineering technique called dynamic deep compaction at the Haggerty High-Technology Industrial Park in Livonia. Due to the high cost of driving deep foundation piles into the mixed fill, including rubble, at the site, the project was scheduled to be abandoned. SME's technique allowed unstable

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