

Advertising Jingles and Slogans: Shaping our Tastes
and Desires Since Louis Bonsib

Thomas Remenschneider

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Insert photo of Bonsib

The topic assigned to me by Susan Burns is “Advertising jingles and slogans: shaping our tastes since Louis Bonsib.” The subject of advertising has been a recurring topic of Quest Club papers since the earliest days, and Louis Bosib’s son Richard was a fellow Quester. I am particularly indebted to Dr. Mike Mastrangelo for his excellent paper, “Louis William Bonsib 1892-1979 More than an Artist,” which has provided much of the historical background for this project. Other important contributors are former Bonsib workers Dennis Neary, Scott Habegger, Todd Steele, and Andy Boyden. Also, Matt Kelley of One Lucky Guitar, Barry Labov, and Alan Nauts of University of St. Francis.

On February 6, 1914, Bruce W. Elliot presented his Quest Club paper, “A Planned Advertising Campaign” in which he describes the campaign to sell lots in North Wildwood, a development by Wildwood Builders. His aim was to demonstrate that advertising should assist the selling campaign in reducing the cost of selling and to increase the volume of sales. He believed that knowledge of the product, understanding its worth, knowing what it can do, and a collaborative approach of the sales team were critical to project success.

Elliot and his team of two other real-estate agents were tasked with selling an addition of 128 lots. Their target was the people of Fort Wayne and vicinity, and “included all classes of people who could save at least \$10 a month.” The team was given a retainer to spend and a month to sell 100 lots. They began with a contest to name the central boulevard. The first ads for the project announced the winner as

“Northwood Boulevard.” The contest had aroused interest in the project, and the official campaign was launched with a full page ad in the Journal. Large ads followed on subsequent days, and a two-page ad on the following Sunday. They planned to do more, but sold all the lots in the first two weeks, and only used half the money they were given. The entire campaign proved the wisdom of having a good product, a good plan, and sticking with it to its successful conclusion.

Just ten years later, in 1924, a young entrepreneur, Louis Bonsib moved from Peru, Indiana to Fort Wayne to begin his Bonsib Advertising Agency. At thirty two years of age, he had an impressive background that served him well. The young Bonsib, after attending a lecture about radios at a Methodist Church, made a Morse Code transmitter from silver dollar shavings, and an antenna made of a window screen attached to a long pole and was communicating with friends and ships at sea with dots and dashes. Later, he was also granted the first license for a ham radio station in Indiana. As a result of that, he began selling radio parts to firms and individuals to make their own sets. An early ham radio customer was the Magnavox Company, which would become a long-term client. The young Bonsib also successfully ran his father’s furniture store and bicycle shop after his father was in an accident.

When his father recovered, Louis went to college. After enrolling at Indiana University, he went to University of Illinois and then back to IU where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa summa cum laude in sociology. In addition to academics, Louis excelled at football and wrestling. In his senior year, he entered a competition to be the senior editor of the Arbutus, the IU yearbook. With his first successful slogan, he won the

competition with "Let the best man win" and led the yearbook team.

The publisher of Arbutus, the Indianapolis Engraving Company, offered Bonsib a position as college service department manager for \$10 a week. It was raised to \$12 a week when he got married. While there, he developed a separate commercial department, growing it from nothing to 10 employees producing more than \$65,000 in income. One of their commercial customers, Jacob L. Brenn of Huntington Laboratories, encouraged him to start his own advertising firm and became his first and an on going client.

Another early client was Wayne Pump for whom he coined one of his most famous slogans, "Fill 'er up!" Related to that, "I'll take my change in gasoline." Additional long term clients were Ford Meter Box, and the H. A. Thrush Company, makers of oil burners and hot water heat. For Thrush, he coined the term "coalatosis" which one gets from coal dust in the house, and the slogan "banish coal dust from your home forever."

Professionally, Louis promoted advertising by founding The Fort Wayne Advertising Club. He also organized the Fort Wayne Industrial Foundation which later became the Economic Development Alliance of Fort Wayne. Through this group, he was successful in bringing companies like Magnavox, International Harvester, and Rae Magnet Wire to Fort Wayne, all of whom were Bonsib clients.

The impact of Louis Bonsib on the city of Fort Wayne can be felt by looking at contemporary newspaper accounts from the News-Sentinel. In February of 1962, the Fort Wayne Advertising Club, founded by Bonsib, awarded him its first Silver Medal

Award in honor of his accomplishments with the agency—not just in advertising, but also as an important corporate citizen. Mayor Paul Burns said “When Louis Bonsib came to Fort Wayne, the city was just half the size that is now. The city grew through efforts of men like Bonsib who encouraged industrial expansion. Because of these pioneer efforts,” the mayor continued, “our city in the year 2000 will, according to all the figures I have, reach a population of 300,000.”

Bonsib, receiving the award, was honored, and said it was the first time anyone had given him a medal. “They took everything I did and tried to make it sound important. Gosh knows, when we did it, we didn’t think it was important. I’m in good health—a little overweight perhaps. But the three skinny doctors who told me I had to lose weight to live are dead.”

In January 1967, the News-Sentinel reported on Louis Bonsib’s stepping down as chairman of the board of the company he founded in 1923. The paper said “Today the firm is a multi-million dollar promotional organization with advertising, public relations, marketing, and management services for regional and national clients.”

In the years following Louis Bonsib’s active participation in the agency, management fell ultimately to his son, Richard Bonsib, who oversaw a talented team of creatives and agents whose influence is still very much felt today. He was president of the agency from 1975 to 2001, and was named a “Legend of Advertising” by the Indiana Federation of Advertising. He also was named a Sagamore of the Wabash by Gov. Evan Bayh. Three of the people on that team, Todd Steele, Scott Habegger, and Dennis Neary, contributors to this paper, have fond memories of their experience with

Bonsib. They note a “Mad Men” kind of experience, talk about “Pit Parties” after 3:00 PM on Fridays in the creatives room of the office building, and are proud of having worked for THAT agency. They refer to themselves as “Bonsibians” and have reunions to share memories of those years.

Dennis Neary helped move the agency into other media. This was a time when cable and the internet were not in full bloom, so audiences were still not very fragmented. I am grateful to Neary who shared the following content from those Richard Bonsib years.

“The Crowing Man” was a television spot to advertise WOWO morning programming. Those of us who grew up listening to WOWO in the mornings will connect with all of the sounds and images: the crowing rooster which opened the morning radio show, weather, news and music (especially Nancy Lee and the Hilltoppers), and the all-important school announcements when we waited anxiously for our school’s name to be read for a snow vacation day. The ad wraps all those items up nicely into “We’ll make your day.”

[Insert Crowing Man video](#)

Staying with WOWO, in this radio commercial an early morning studio intruder, impersonating Bob Sievers is questioned by a worker, and meets the real Bob Sievers in a comical interaction that manages to include all the elements of the WOWO morning agenda like entertainment, weather, farm news, and information, concluding with the slogan “give us your morning, and we’ll make your day!”

[Insert radio ad](#)

In 1982, Hardware Wholesalers Inc. launched their revamped Do It Center stores featuring bright signage, rearranging stores to make them look bigger and making products easier to find. HWI worked with Bonsib to promote the roll-out with this radio spot and other print and video material. This spot is totally sung, but it is not really a jingle. The slogan "now you can" is repeated often along with "you do it yourself a better way," underscoring the Do It Center theme. Another theme is if you want it done now, and you want it done right, you can do it best at the new Do It Center.

[Insert do it best ad](#)

The final radio commercial from this time period is from the Indiana Farm Bureau. It may qualify as a jingle because it is essentially all sung with the slogan "you've got to work the farm to understand." The ad begins with reasons why farmers love their work, and the underlying challenges of maximizing yields, crop management, and profits. It also points to the partnership with farmers and the Farm Bureau, with the implied understanding that the Farm Bureau works the land right along with the farmer making them partners "who understand."

[Insert Farm Bureau ad](#)

In the late 1990's Allied Van Lines was positioning itself as a leader in Fort Wayne, and used the Bonsib Agency in producing a campaign to promote the brand as a leader in corporate transfers. One of the first things, according to Dennis Neary, that became apparent in discussions was that Allied was focusing their attention on the employee being transferred, while the person doing the lion's share of the moving

coordination was usually the wife. The Bonsib Agency, through Todd Steele, convinced them to change their focus, and it was a successful move. (No pun intended) The campaign portrayed the husband flying off to his new position with the wife managing children, boxes, pre-schools, etc. in addition to making the move. Andy Boyden did the print media for the campaign, and two examples of which are here:

[Insert Allied Vans ad 1](#)

Notice the Mom-mom heading and the photo with mom and two children vying for her attention. She's paying attention to them and the ad is implying that Allied is paying attention to the moving: "Moving you ahead."

[Insert Allied Vans ad 2](#)

This headline and photo of the second ad again emphasizes the wife handling the move by herself, but the text of the ad assures "even if you're feeling all alone—you're not. At least Allied is here to help."

Dennis Neary was the writer and producer for the video promotion which was a Clio Award finalist in 1990. The ad features the wife talking about her calmness about moving (lots and lots of boxes, two pre-schools, three kids, etc.) with blue-sy music playing in the background. The ad captures her composure juxtaposed with a chaotic background of the kids running around, saying "I moved—he flew away to work." The moving away shots are all sepia, and the shots in the new home are in color. The presence of Allied Van Lines boxes, and large moving van underscore the reason for her confidence. "I'm going to like it here," she says followed by "it was a really good move." Not just the relocation, but also a really good move to choose Allied Van Lines.

Neary explained further that the entire project was done with high quality materials and techniques—no corners cut. For example, even though there is no singing in the ad, there is music throughout which was composed and recorded specifically for this commercial.

[Insert Allied Van Lines video](#)

Dennis Neary recounts the evening of the Clio Awards when he was to receive his award: “Funny, the Clio Awards ceremony was in New York. Bonsib sent me to the awards, but a thunderstorm that day delayed my flight in. Late, I threw on my Tuxedo and arrived at Lincoln Center, where Willard Scott was presenting the awards, just as everyone was leaving the auditorium. No one at the after party wanted to talk with a guy from Fort Wayne who had just been named a finalist (beating out their Madison Avenue work) so I ditched the party and went to my favorite Manhattan restaurant, Neary’s Pub coincidentally, and had a delish late dinner where it wasn’t unusual to see someone step up the bar late night in a tuxedo.”

At the end of the Bonsib Agency years, the advertising landscape included four television stations plus PBS which was commercial-free. We had several local am and fm radio stations, and two major newspapers. That scenario made a rather cohesive market with which to work.

John Bonsib left the agency in 1972 to start Citizen’s Cable. Cable television introduced around 30 stations from which to choose. That served to fragment the audience, making it more difficult to reach a single large audience. Later in the cable era, Nielsen began cable ratings, but before that, it was what Tod Steele called “the

wild, wild west.”

With internet and streaming services, audience fragmentation became a much bigger problem with an infinite number of stations. There is quantitative data on the IP addresses of who is watching, but no data on if they are watching ad-supported programming or how many sets of eyes are watching.

The two main services for data are Nielsen who tracks TV, radio, streaming, etc. The other service is Comscore: global media measurement and analytics company. Agencies typically use one or the other of these services because of expense. Tod Steele says “In today’s market, data subscription costs are the single biggest overhead expense for an agency, but it is essential. If you take the science of media seriously, you gotta play the game.”

In the Bonsib years and a little later, the Fort Wayne market included not a few locally headquartered national companies. The list included, but is not limited to Lincoln Life, Magnavox, Rea Magnet Wire, and Harvester Trucks. Virtually all of the banks were locally owned. Grocery stores were all locally headquartered with the exception of Kroger. Fort Wayne also was considered a test market for many products which put advertisers in a good position for promotion of brands and product. Closer to our present time, Health-care was the largest category five or six years ago, with Lutheran Health Network and Parkview Health the leading clients. That has morphed in time with administrative changes especially at Lutheran. Lutheran scaled their advertising considerably, so Parkview did not have to do as much, except, as we will see later in the paper, when they embarked on a major re-branding campaign.

Now health-care is still important, but it includes orthopedic prosthetics, hospice care, nursing care, and assisted living care and facilities. The non-profit sector had also become an important part of the present scenario. That includes projects for fine arts like the Performing Arts Center renovation, the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo, Headwaters Park, and K-12 through adult and university education. Another leading category for advertising according to Steele is personal injury lawyers.

Jingles have been replaced with ads that move the viewer with emotion through narrative or storytelling. Although those 80's jingles will always be cherished, the concept of storytelling advertising in the 21st century has driven sales like never before, pushing consumers to truly believe in what is being offered to them. Besides that, jingles used to always be with original music. Agencies had live singers and instrumentalists in studio recording ads. In Fort Wayne, that was the specialty of Barry Labov at Labov and Beyond, and Chuck Surack who got his start in jingles. Now there is a whole industry of pre-recorded music that can be downloaded to provide the appropriate background to the ad.

Jingles, according to Tod Steele, are primarily a tactic of retail advertising. Most of the famous jingles we all remember are targeted at a specific product. Bonsib and agencies like it were more corporate brand agencies than retail. Barry Labov says that jingles are not a part of what his business is today, which is focused on brand differentiation.

David Ogelvy, practically an oracle of advertising, has this to say about jingles:

Candor compels me to admit that I have no conclusive research to support my

view that jingles are less persuasive than the spoken word. It is based on the difficulty I always experience in hearing the words in jingles, and on my experience as a door-to-door salesman; I never sang to my prospects. The advertisers who believe in the selling power of jingles have never had to sell anything.

Slogans, on the other hand, are very much around. They may go by a variety of names like tag-lines, or catch-phrases, but the concept is the same: a phrase or sentence that encapsulates the core meaning of a campaign that can be used repeatedly to drive the idea home. We will see examples of this in the final part of this paper.

I asked Scott Habegger, of the Habegger Furniture family in Berne, a Bonsib alummi, (where he met his wife) and later a marketing executive with Harley Davidson, who now does adjunct teaching at Milwaukee School of Engineering, what the influence of Bonsib might be today. He replied, "to be honest, maybe not a lot." The influence is much more in concept than content. He adds "My students have never used a newspaper. Smart phones haven't changed them—they've always had them." He also maintains that much of the online advertising such as Google Ads is not very good, but persists because it is free or very cheap. He believes agencies need to focus much more on attention to product details to distinguish themselves. Habegger suggested I consult the work of Keith Reinhard for a "state of the art of advertising." Reinhard, a fellow Berne native, is chairman emeritus of Doyle Dane Burnbach in Chicago, and the coiner of the slogan "you deserve a break today" for McDonalds.

Reinhard, in a talk about "Advertising Today", presents an excellent synopsis of

the contemporary advertising scene. He offers the following:

- Advertising has always been about connecting brands with people and people with brands—it still is.
- Now, if we do it right, those humans we engage will actually connect with each other and all their friends to build a whole community of brand fans and lovers.
- The basics haven't changed and won't change. We've always said word of mouth is the best medium of all. Word of web is even better.
- People seek brands that will help them survive and succeed and take care of their own.
- They want brands that will help them be loved and admired and that will in some way enrich or improve their lives.

Reinhard describes three eras of advertising, the first of which is from the 50's to the 90's which he calls the Creative Revolution where Bill Burnbach led the effort to respect the intelligence of the consumer with humor, irony wit, and emotion. The emphasis was on the importance of craft and the power of a well-told story over mindless repetition.

Next was the digital revolution which brought amazing new tools to make connections between people and brands. Also mountains of data to better understand and locate client's prospects. It seemed like obsession with technology was diverting attention from the basics—digital disruption as digital distraction?

The third is what Reinhard calls "the ultimate revelation." What will be revealed? He answers:

- There is a profound difference between creating a buzz and creating a brand.

- There is an important difference between a on-off start and a compelling brand story that endures.
- There's a difference between an algorithm and a true insight into human nature.
- There's a difference between a click and a true connection.
- There's a big difference between big data and a big idea.

Words like digital and traditional will lose their meaning—they'll all blend into one word called "advertising"—the critical art of connecting brands with people.

In being assigned this topic, I was given the challenge of speaking about something about which I know nothing. Therefore for the noble idea of the "quest." I looked at hundreds of ads, too many jingles to think about, and continued to fret over "shaping our tastes and desires since Louis Bonsib." In my survey of historic jingles and slogans, the best ones seemed to be pithy and on point for whatever was being promoted. They also had consistency and were used repetitively throughout a campaign.

That made me think about an area in which I do have some experience: classical music. I would like to share with you a few examples of musical "slogans." They are all very well known, even by people who don't normally listen to classical music, precisely because they are immediately memorable and also perfectly illustrate what really good advertising accomplishes.

The first is Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Everyone knows the famous ta ta ta taaah opening theme. In those four notes, Beethoven sets the melodic and rhythmic foundation of the entire symphony. Let me just share a few examples:

Opening theme

Here the slogan, or musical tag line (called a motif) is boldly stated, and almost continuously repeated. The idea had been firmly established.

[Insert Beethoven mvt. 1](#)

Second movement

The slow movement begins with a gentle melody without the opening motif. But after a short time, it appears like you're being tapped on the shoulder asking,

"Remember me?"

[Insert Beethoven mvt. 2](#)

Third Movement

Movement three begins with a mysterious, searching melody, and all of a sudden our tag line motif jumps out with a big full-orchestral "Boo!"

[Insert Beethoven Mvt. 3](#)

Fourth Movement

The finale begins with three chords in C Major. The motif is in the rhythm of the opening music, but at the end of the example, unison strings make an exuberant statement of the "tag line" leading to the finale theme.

[Insert Beethoven Mvt. 4](#)

A second example is the famous canon of Johann Pachelbel. The bass line never changes under an exact three-part canon in the upper strings.

[Insert Pachelbel Canon](#)

Finally, one of the great single tune pieces of the orchestral repertoire: Ravel's

Bolero.

There are actually three constants here: the snare drum solo, the bolero melody—so much so that the snare drummer is often brought to the front in the soloist spot, and a single-pitch instrumental version of the percussion rhythm that never changes, suspended above everything.

Insert Bolero

To conclude, I want to focus on two campaigns by Fort Wayne agencies that demonstrate the concepts of brand development, storytelling, and making connections of product with consumers by “shaping their thoughts and desires.” They also have a connection in one way or another with the Bonsib Agency. The first, Parkview’s “Don’t Text and Drive” campaign is from Boyden and Youngblutt. Andy Boyden worked for Bonsib and provided information for this paper. The second, the campaign for “Riverfront Fort Wayne” comes from One Lucky Guitar. Matt Kelley was the first person I consulted for this topic, and he set my quest on the right path. Tod Steele, another paper contributor and the person who bought the Bonsib Agency, works with Matt Kelley as OLG’s media buyer.

Don’t Text and Drive:

Parkview Health is a client of Boyden and Youngblutt for whom the agency created a huge re-branding campaign. According to B and Y materials, “Parkview Health was in need of a fresh new look and messaging that would tie them to the community and make people feel good about choosing Parkview.” The “Not for profit-all for you” campaign was the foundation of a group of promotional campaigns. One of

the arms of the campaign was to emphasize Parkview's "forward-thinking mindset."

Around the same time, Boyden and Youngblutt was asked to do a public service assignment. This was a project funded by the state, which they coordinated with Parkview Trauma Centers. The campaign centered around the slogan "Don't text and drive" with the word "die" highlighted in the word "drive." Much of the media used, whether print, audio, or video, emphasizes the grave consequences of texting and driving. This includes the slogan on a body bag, and video of crash that is the result of distracted driving.

[Insert crash video](#)

The slogan was placed everywhere on t-shirts, air fresheners that were passed out all over the community, at major displays in the mall, on busses, vans, and in the creation of a Don't Text and Drive Facebook page. An auto dealer wrapped cars, and there was even a shop for Don't Text and Drive merchandise. All of the promotional media supported the public benefit of not texting and driving. It also clearly connects the message with "Parkview Trauma Centers."

[Insert photos](#)

The campaign went viral and international. A Facebook campaign went from the already big number of 89,000 fans to an impressive 133,757. Then a call came from a hospital in Colorado asking for permission to use the material. That was followed by a call to Parkview from the United Nations to use the campaign internationally. All permissions were granted pro bono. Andy Boyden said "it was one of those campaigns that just took off. It had a lot of momentum behind it."

Insert news clip

Riverfront Fort Wayne

Before Promenade Park was a reality, the idea of promoting our rivers as an asset to Fort Wayne was presented to One Lucky Guitar. The city of Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation came to OLG for the promotion, which according to Matt Kelley is rare, but Mayor Henry wanted to make sure the entire community was involved, and the area was open to all. While the park did not yet exist, there had been programming on the rivers like the dragon boats and kayaks. The campaign began, then, with the idea that if excitement could be generated in the rivers which engaged people, when the park finally opened the audience would be built in. While there were already downtown developments on the rivers, they all came with attendant expenses: restaurants, coffee shops, etc. You had to pay to get the goods. The underlying concept of Promenade Park was that it was to be free and truly accessible to all.

Kelley emphasizes that it really is the people's park. In the brand development process they did workshops with "brand champions", 15-20 individuals representing different segments of the community. This was not just with mayor/park board representation. They talked with neighborhood groups, business leaders, arts groups, Black Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Chamber, Visit Fort Wayne. All voices were heard. Kelley describes it as a very unique experience.

The tag line for the promotion was "Always Moving." Movement is obvious in the materials of the campaign. Motion is everywhere. The logo, created by Jonathan

Barter is a continuous line, representing the river, also a horizon with a sun or moon setting on the river. It has proven to be very adaptable on everything from buttons to manhole covers.

[Insert logo photos](#)

This photo from the introductory promotional material demonstrates the moving nature of both the river and the relaxing experience of kayaking in it. I think it's interesting that the water is blue—a good antidote to the common greenish-brown associated with our rivers.

[Insert kayak photo](#)

The park is announced with this print media:

[Insert billboard, sidewalk placard, sidewalk plaque](#)

Notice the bold welcome of “Hello, new park”, the use of the logo in two different settings, and the mention of “a free community event sponsored by Mayor Tom Henry.” This corresponds to the whole nature of the collaborative planning process.

Finally, a promotional video for Riverfront Fort Wayne incorporates everything that is integral to the project. It opens with the running water of the river, the people and the places match exactly what is being narrated. What is also felt is that everything and everybody is in motion—this is the joyful experience of being at the river—a moving experience.

[Insert video](#)

Both of these examples and the ads from the Bonsib Agency illustrate in the best

way how our thoughts and desires are shaped in the campaigns produced by a vibrant Fort Wayne advertising community resting in one way or another on the shoulders of great predecessors like Louis Bonisb.