

ABSTRACT

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ADVERTISING DURING THE GEORGE
WASHINGTON HILL YEARS: 1926-1946

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From the time George Hill assumed the presidency of the American Tobacco Company in 1926 until his death in 1946, the company spent more money advertising Lucky Strikes than had ever before been spent on a single product. During Hill's tenure, Americans bought more than 100 billion Lucky Strikes annually. Hill's carefully engineered and innovative advertising campaigns integrated print, radio, public relations, and other forms of advertising to great success in the 1920s and 1930s as the company sought out a mass audience. By World War II, however, the company changed strategies as it increasingly diversified its advertisements to reflect new conceptions of audience segmentation. This abandonment of a "great mass audience" approach paralleled changes in other cultural industries in this period, demonstrating the significance of advertising as part of the mid-century cultural landscape and emphasizing the genius of the ATC's marketing.

MORE THAN LUCK: LUCKY STRIKE ADVERTISING DURING THE GEORGE
WASHINGTON HILL YEARS:1926-1946

By

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To Andra, for giving me a reason to finish.

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Introduction

George Washington Hill was president of the American Tobacco Company (ATC) for twenty years. After dropping out of school to work as a laborer in a company warehouse in 1904, he rose through the ranks to become “the world’s greatest advertiser” by the time he died in 1946.¹ Though his name was largely unknown to contemporaries (he was seldom interviewed or made public appearances), it was hard to miss the name Lucky Strike, the cigarette brand he devoted his life to selling. Lucky Strike dominated Hill’s life: he grew tobacco in his New York mansion, taped cartons to the windows of his car, and even named his two dachshunds “Lucky” and “Strike.” Visitors at his home and office who doubted his commitment to the brand were quickly corrected if they tried to light any other kind of cigarette in his presence; he had a habit of tossing any “offending” cigarettes out the window.² George Hill could not be satisfied unless the rest of America was in love with Lucky Strike too.

When Hill became president of the ATC in 1926 Americans were smoking around 30 billion cigarettes annually, about seventeen percent of which were Lucky Strike. Twenty years later this figure had jumped to 300 billion cigarettes, over a third of which were Lucky Strike.³ “The man largely responsible” one observer recalled, “was George Washington Hill.”⁴ As president, Hill spent over \$250,000,000

¹ "Advertising: Hill Legends," *Newsweek*, September 23, 1946. 76.

² "George Washington Hill Dies," *Life*, September 23, 1946. 47.

³ Neil H. Borden, *The Economic Effects of Advertising*, 4th ed. (Chicago: Richard Irwin, Inc., 1947), 229.

advertising Lucky Strike, more than any other advertiser had ever spent on a single product before.⁵ Newspapers, magazines, radio, film, even exhibits at the 1939 World's Fair were fair game for Hill, and he filled them with many colorful and memorable Lucky Strike ads each year. But Hill did not just sign the checks for the company ad budget; he also had a hand in creating many of the campaigns and slogans that found their way on to Lucky Strike ads. "Hill has shown a genius for advertising and sales psychology," one critic wrote, "which has forced recognition for himself as the most dynamic figure in the tobacco industry- which, in retrospect, is epical."⁶ Even when he didn't write or edit an ad, he personally approved each one before it was released. Copywriters and other employees who could not conform to his style of advertising quickly found themselves out of a job.

During Hill's time as president, the ATC created and employed a complex advertising strategy to improve sales of Lucky Strike. It sought to capture the attention of American consumers and turn them into loyal customers. The methods the company used to promote Lucky Strikes demonstrate how they viewed the American public and what the best ways to motivate it were. Lucky Strike advertising went through major changes in this period, and reflects the larger changes that took place within the company and in American society at large. American Tobacco thought that it used effective advertising strategies, as demonstrated by the amount of

⁴ "George Washington Hill Dies."

⁵ Ibid.

⁶George H. Allen, "He Makes America Sit Up and Buy: George Washington Hill." *Forbes*, January 1, 1933, 12.

resources they put into advertising and the record-breaking sales figures they believed was the result.

Lucky Strike advertising that was created before World War II was characterized by a desire to centralize and consolidate advertising as much as possible. Beginning with print media campaigns in the 1920s (the dominant medium of advertising at the time), Lucky Strike ads were all purposely unified under a single theme- modernity. Though the images, copy, and topics of ads regularly changed over the years, this underlying theme was always present. When radio came onto the advertising scene in the late 1920s, American Tobacco quickly recognized the unifying abilities the new mass medium had to offer. Millions of dollars were spent developing radio campaigns that tried to unify listeners with messages of national identity and mass consumption. A unified audience, the company believed, would be more responsive to a unified sales message. American Tobacco also explored other non-traditional sites of advertising such as product placement in films and public relations campaigns that turned the news into advertising propaganda as well. These “alternative” forms of advertising were unifiers as well. American Tobacco used them to integrate or “intertextualize” all types of Lucky Strike advertising together to form more persuasive advertisements that all reinforced each other. Under Hill’s direction, American Tobacco used each of these unique mediums to centralize their advertising message and target audience.

American Tobacco’s attempts to unify themes in Lucky Strike advertising and their potential customers reveal how they viewed American consumer society. They envisioned their customers as members of a single mass audience, a central nucleus of

consumers that were all motivated to act in the same way. In the early 20th century many advertisers believed in the existence of what Jackson Lears has called “a child like mass audience” that could be manipulated with creative advertising that appealed to their longings and desires.⁷ American Tobacco’s advertising was targeted towards this “mass audience” demographic- a well-to-do urban audience that looked and felt modern. If consumers did not fit this description, Lucky Strike advertising tried to persuade them that by buying Luckies they would become a part of the mass American audience. In the years leading up to World War II, this strategy dominated Lucky Strike advertising in every medium.

Equally important to American Tobacco’s vision of a great mass audience was its unquestionable whiteness. Lucky Strike ads created before the Second World War clearly stated the racial qualifications of their mass audience by omitting and ignoring consumers of color. From the model smokers drawn on print ads to the celebrities who endorsed the brand in radio and film, Lucky Strike was advertised before World War II as a cigarette exclusively for white smokers. Racial diversity was hidden from American Tobacco’s advertising campaigns and it is clear that the company only associated negative qualities with people of color despite the fact that millions of them smoked regularly. Though this thesis will not discuss racial representations in Lucky Strike advertising before World War II in depth, it is important to note that the omission of diversity makes race an important part of Lucky Strike’s history.

American Tobacco’s belief in a mass audience did not last Hill’s entire career. As the Second World War created new challenges in manufacturing and advertising,

⁷ Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America*, (New York: Basic Books), 1995, 221.

the company began to explore new strategies in order to shield themselves from material shortages and an American public struggling to adapt to life in wartime. In the months after the United States entered the war, Lucky Strike advertising began to fragment into campaigns that appealed to the consumer public in radically different ways. At this time, American Tobacco began to realize that there was not a single mass audience buying Lucky Strikes, and that different kinds of advertising appeals could be used simultaneously and result in high sales. When Hill died a year after the war's end, over 100 billion Lucky Strikes were sold in the United States alone, a testament, they believed, to the power of their newly improved advertising techniques.⁸

Despite the numerous innovations that George Hill pioneered and developed in his quest to sell Lucky Strikes, he remains fairly elusive to historians. The only discussions about Hill or Lucky Strike are brief and not comprehensive for this entire period. Nonetheless, there are a number of important works that engage with the some of the same arguments found in this thesis. Since the 1970s advertising histories have fallen into two main groups that place advertising in between business and cultural history. The first approaches advertising agencies and their roles as business enterprises. These historians fit advertising into a complex social, cultural, and economic system made up of changing marketing strategies, new relationships between business and the media, and advances in distribution systems. In 1976, Stuart Ewen's *Captains of Consciousness* was the first to argue that ad men and other business leaders conspired to direct the buying habits, desires, and worldviews of the public once distribution, rather than production, became a critical problem of

⁸ For a comparison of sales by cigarette brand, see Figure 1.

capitalism. Advertisers like Hill encouraged Americans to adopt a whole new culture of consumption that went beyond the mere purchase of certain products.⁹ Michael Schudson, while perceptive of the coercive power of advertising, has made the case for a more complex relationship between manufacturers and advertising agencies, and that advertising is just one factor in successful marketing.¹⁰ Similarly, American Tobacco had complex (and often strained) associations with advertisers, publicists, industrial designers, and other agents they contracted with. Although it is out of the scope of this thesis, other factors such as pricing, distribution, and executive organization were also important factors in the success of the Lucky Strike brand and its impact on society. In recent years Inger Stole has contributed to this school of thought by exploring the relationships between public and private propaganda during World War II. She argues that the advertising industry maintained a “symbiotic” relationship with the federal government to protect itself from regulation and promote wartime consumption of consumer goods.¹¹

In his 1990 work, *New and Improved*, Richard Tedlow added to the “business enterprise” approach by analyzing the battles between soft drink and automobile manufacturers, grocery stores, and mail-order companies to determine why branding and other marketing techniques gave certain companies a competitive advantage in the late 19th and mid 20th centuries.¹² Similarly, Stefan Schwarzkopf has also

⁹ Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company), 1976.

¹⁰ Michael Schudson, *Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion: Its Dubious Impact on American Society*, (New York: Basic Books), 1984.

¹¹ Inger Stole, *Advertising at War: Business, Consumers, and Government in the 1940s*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 2012.

carefully researched the development of branding in the early 20th century and argued that advertising agencies discovered the emotional and symbolic qualities of brands and used them to encourage consumer loyalty and identity, important qualities in an increasingly competitive market.¹³

The second significant analytical dimension of recent advertising history, enriched by gendered and racial perspectives, is more cultural in focus. Dealing with subcultures of advertising men, their interactions and relationships with manufacturers, and their connections with larger cultural trends, this second school complements the first by placing advertising within the context of American culture. One of the most influential histories of advertising has been Roland Marchand's *Advertising the American Dream*. In this 1985 work, Marchand explores the concept of "modernity," which advertisers used to promote a new vision of American society in the early 20th century where the consumption of goods solved the problems of modern life. Like Schudson, Marchand asserts that advertisers leveraged changes in American society to their advantage, but were not the creators or shapers of this new consumer society.¹⁴ Another benchmark cultural history of advertising is Jackson Lears' *Fables of Abundance*, which also assigns national advertisers a dominant role in shaping modern consumer culture in somewhat the same way Ewen did earlier. Lears views advertising in the early 20th century as a "magical" force that influenced

¹² Richard S. Tedlow, *New and Improved: The Story of Mass Marketing in America*, (New York: Basic Books), 1990.

¹³ Stefan Schwarzkopf, "Turning Trade Marks into Brands: how Advertising Agencies Created Brands in the Global Market Place, 1900-1930." *CGR Working Paper Series, Queen Mary University of London* (August 2008).

¹⁴ Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1985.

consumers with imagery of abundance and modernity.¹⁵ In recent decades, historians like Jason Chambers have also begun to examine advertising's impact on racial attitudes in American culture. In his 2008 work, *Madison Avenue and the Color Line*, he reveals the perilous relationship that African Americans have had with the advertising industry. In his analysis of the struggle for dignified portrayals of African Americans in ads, he places these people's efforts inside the larger context of African American social, political, and economic movements in the 20th century.¹⁶

Pamela Laird has attempted to connect the business and cultural sides of advertising history together by concentrating her research on the design, production, and distribution of advertisements. Using cultural analysis and examining the evolution of the institution of advertising between 1860 and 1920, her book *Advertising Progress* argues that as advertising became professionalized at the turn of the century, admen defined "progress" as the accumulation of consumer goods in an effort to bring individuals away from older modes of consumption. Like other historians Laird points to large national manufacturers like American Tobacco as the pioneers of marketing and advertising innovations.¹⁷ In the same spirit, this thesis will attempt to unite the business and cultural pieces of advertising studies in order to reveal the relationship between Lucky Strike advertising and American culture.

The story of the American Tobacco Company during the George Hill years also is one of a national manufacturer that sought to be a source of cultural authority

¹⁵ See Lears, *Fables of Abundance*.

¹⁶ Jason Chambers, *Madison Avenue and the Color Line: African Americans in the Advertising Industry*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 2008.

¹⁷ Pamela W. Laird, *Advertising Progress: American Business and the Rise of Consumer Marketing*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 1998.

and an active participant in the formation of a modern consumer culture. This thesis will try to add to the characterizations of the advertising industry in the early 20th century by adding two important concepts: the advertiser's belief (or disbelief) in a mass audience and the importance of different mediums of advertising. Analyzing these concepts is essential to understanding of Lucky Strike advertising, and will feature heavily in the chapters of this thesis. I hope to demonstrate why George Hill and American Tobacco believed these underlying principles were so important in successful advertising.

In Chapter One I will discuss the ways in which American Tobacco centralized their advertising strategies around the Lucky Strike brand after George Hill became company president. Print was the dominant medium of advertising up until the early 1930s, and was the only significant type of advertising the company used when Hill assumed control of the company. Lucky Strike advertising was centralized around the single theme- adapting to modernity. Though each ad campaign would look fresh and new, but it still adhered to the same basic theme and concepts, that buying Lucky Strike would help a consumer live a more modern lifestyle. The company's decision to consolidate all Lucky Strike advertising under this single theme is evidence for their belief in a mass audience that would respond best to the same unchanging message.

Chapter Two explores "alternative" forms of advertising; mediums that were not traditionally used by advertisers in the early 20th century. George Hill invested significant resources into creating public relations events, developing an extensive product placement campaign in Hollywood films, and maintaining an exhibit at the

1939 New York World's Fair. These advertising mediums were often far less noticeable than other more traditional types like print or radio, but came to serve an important role in the overall Lucky Strike advertising strategy. Alternative advertising was designed to "intertextualize" or integrate different types of advertising together, so different Lucky Strike ads would connect and reinforce each other. These alternative advertising campaigns are also clear evidence of American Tobacco's attempts to manipulate American culture and society to make it more of a homogenous mass audience. Actively creating a mass audience of pro-cigarette consumers, they believed, would make all Lucky Strike advertising more effective.

Chapter Three discusses radio- another medium of advertising that American Tobacco used to create a more unified mass audience. Hill was a pioneer of the sponsored radio show- a broadcasting format that gave the advertiser complete control over the advertising *and* entertainment portions of each show. As a result, the ATC was actively creating popular American culture and imbedding their advertising messages and beliefs directly into every aspect of the show. Lucky Strike programs consciously encouraged listeners to think of themselves as a unified *American* audience, eliminating any regional or local differences. This nationalist rhetoric was built into the songs, announcements, and advertisements in each episode of popular shows like *Your Hit Parade* and *Kay Kyser's Kollege*. American Tobacco's adoption of radio also allowed them to spend their advertising budget more efficiently, and helped the company reduce its advertising costs per cigarette by 45% by the end of the 1930s.

Finally, Chapter Four examines the collapse of the unified Lucky Strike advertising campaigns during World War II. Wartime shortages and the migration of Americans around the country and overseas radically changed consumer society and forced American Tobacco to overcome new issues. As a result, Lucky Strike advertising began to fragment. Different campaigns targeted Americans with inherently different types of appeals, and demonstrate that the company was beginning to realize that a mass audience did not exist. Instead, the ATC used some advertisements that contained idealized (and unrepresentative) pictures of American life in wartime, and others that seemed to recognize the real impact that the war had on individuals and groups. The ATC realized that consumer society was better persuaded to act through advertisements that appealed to target groups around the same time that the concept of a “mass American audience” were being disproven in other industries.

At the end of George Hill’s life Lucky Strike was the most popular cigarette brand in the United States, and advertising had played a large part in this. Without Hill’s dynamic leadership after his death in 1946, the company diversified into other cigarette brands and Lucky Strike slowly faded into obscurity within a few decades. This thesis will investigate the American Tobacco Company before Hill’s death and the decline of Lucky Strike and analyze the strategies the company used to make the brand to successful in this period.

Chapter 1: “He Makes America Sit Up and Buy:” Lucky Strike Print Advertising, 1926-1940

It was a cold day in January, 1926 when George Washington Hill stepped into the President’s Office of the American Tobacco Company. The room was familiar to him, it had been occupied by his father, Percival Hill, for thirteen years until his death the previous December, and the two had spent many hours in there together keeping the company alive as rival companies threatened to bankrupt them. George had just been chosen as new president by the board of trustees, and knew that American Tobacco would need to radically alter its business plan if it was to compete with rival tobacco firms. For years now, the company had been slipping further and further behind R.J. Reynolds and Liggett & Myers, competitors who had been making enormous profits with their new cigarette brands: Camel and Chesterfield. These brands had been introduced and heavily advertised in the early 1910s and quickly captured the tobacco market at the expense of American Tobacco, even though the ATC sold dozens of brands of cigarettes, cigars, and loose tobacco blends. Even the creation of the Lucky Strike brand (in 1917) was not enough to stop American Tobacco’s decline, even though the cigarette had been designed and manufactured using identical processes as Camel cigarettes.¹⁸ If American Tobacco was going to make any progress under George Hill’s leadership, it was clear that radical new changes were needed.

¹⁸ In a 1934 experiment blindfolded consumers were asked to differentiate between Camel, Lucky Strike, and Chesterfield, and they were correct only 31% of the time. According to the report, “many subjects expressed a liking for a particular cigarette and thought that it was their favorite, and were terribly upset to find that it actually was one which they ordinarily refused to smoke, even if they had to go without.” Though many consumers did not realize it, the brand name was the only real difference between Lucky Strike and other cigarettes. Richard W. Husband and Jane Godfrey. "An Experimental Study of Cigarette Identification." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 18, no. 2 (April 1934): 220-23.

After World War I, the smoking habits of the American public shifted away from cigars and chewing tobacco, and towards cigarettes. Once considered to be the “poor man’s tobacco,” the cigarette was a cheaper smoke that could be carried and used quickly. Advances in manufacturing in the late 19th century allowed cigarettes to be manufactured by machine, and soon companies like American Tobacco were able to produce them by the billions, in much larger volume than other tobacco products. As the lives of Americans became increasingly mobile and fast-paced in the 1920s, cigarettes became more popular and tobacco manufacturers took notice.¹⁹ At American Tobacco, the Lucky Strike brand soon became their largest and most popular cigarette, and was a personal favorite of George Hill.

While he was an ATC junior-executive, George Hill was present when his father developed the first Lucky Strike advertising campaign. At a 1916 meeting in the President’s Office, George mentioned that the new Lucky Strike cigarette contained tobacco that was heated and cooked by machinery to give it a pleasant aroma. A subordinate responded that Hill’s comment reminded him of the toast he had for breakfast and Percival instantly realized that this idea could be used for advertising the cigarette. “That is it,” he exclaimed, “it is toasted.”²⁰ Here was a way to make Lucky Strike stand out from other brands. Advertisements featuring the slogan “It’s Toasted” accompanied Lucky Strike at its release in 1917, and helped the brand capture about ten percent of the American cigarette market. Success was not to follow however, as Lucky Strike failed to make significant gains on Camel and

¹⁹ For more on the shift to cigarettes, see Borden, 219-222.

²⁰ The American Tobacco Company. *“Sold American!”- The First Fifty Years.* (1954), 54.

Chesterfield, who still dominated the market. When George took the company's reins in 1926, it was clear that a change in advertising was needed.

One of the most important changes in Lucky Strike advertising was the adoption of unifying theme- modernity. Though the subject matter and imagery of advertisements might change wildly from one year to the next, the underlying notion that Lucky Strikes were modern cigarettes always remained. The standard definition of modernity in advertising in this period has been argued most forcefully by Roland Marchand in *Advertising the American Dream*. Marchand contended that "modern" meant promoting "new urban habits" that were characteristic of the present day. It was also important to him that these ideas were communicated to the consuming public with an individual tone that denied the impersonal nature of 20th century industry and economies of scale.²¹ But in many ways, American Tobacco's vision of "modernity" was not just about identifying what was new, fashionable, and progressive; it was about deciding who belonged in this modern society and who did not.

By imbuing Lucky Strikes with certain qualities, they became a bridge for the consumer to cross from a backwards, pre-modern world and into a modern way of life that was wholly positive. Lucky Strikes helped the overweight become slender and the ordinary become glamorous. It helped smokers feel more refined and stylish. American Tobacco used modernity to act as a gate-keeper in American popular society. Modernity was a tool to welcome the "right" consumers- mostly urban, upper

²¹ Marchand, 9. For more on how advertisers defined modernity in the early 20th century, Marchand has cited a number of important works in his first chapter that explore "modernity" in the past three centuries. Also see Chapter 12 of Jackson Lear's *Fables of Abundance*: "The Courtship of Avant-Garde and Kitsch."

and middle-class whites to their new community and exclude anyone else who did not fit in. Lucky Strike ads invoked advanced science, the popularity of film and stage stars, and other qualities of contemporary popular culture in order to appear modern. And by doing so, the ATC implied that consumers who did not smoke Luckies were not included in modern society.

Advertising in newspapers, magazines, billboards, and other printed mediums was the most common form of advertising in the 1920s when George Hill became president. A visual combination of slogans, images, and advertising copy, printed ads gave the ATC the opportunity to appeal to potential customers both in public and at home. A further advantage that this advertising medium offered was that they could be modified quickly. Printed ads were temporary, the materials they were printed on were not meant to be kept permanently. As a result, Lucky Strike advertisements could be quickly adjusted whenever needed without worry that many older, outmoded ads were still circulating. Changing the appearance and content of Lucky Strike to react to changes in American society rapidly helped the ATC keep its cigarettes fresh in the reading public's mind. The ubiquitousness of printed material in American society meant that these advertisements could be the solution to the ATC's problems... if the company was able to create effective advertising themes and strategies.

The beginning of Hill's efforts to change Lucky Strike advertising and turn brand's fortunes around (and the entire company with it) began when the ATC hired the services of the Lord & Thomas advertising agency. Albert Lasker, the head of this agency, was considered one of the fathers of modern advertising and had been in the

business since the late 1890s. Lasker was known for a technique called “reason-why” advertising, that offered customers a concrete reason why they should buy a particular product or brand. Lasker thought that advertising should function in the same way as a salesman would in conversation with a consumer. “Instead of general claims, pretty pictures, or jingles,” one advertising historian later commented, Lasker thought “an ad should offer a concrete *reason why* the product was worth buying.”²² Lasker’s advertising was created for an audience that was “uneducated but not stupid,” easy to understand with appeals made by rational and sensible arguments.²³ “We saw more clearly than ever than it is copy that makes advertising pay,” Lasker wrote in 1926, a year after he took on American Tobacco as a client, revealing his emphasis on the message over emotional imagery in advertising.²⁴ Treating advertisements as “salesmanship-in-print” and the reason-why philosophy was the means through which Lasker believed products appealed to consumers. These techniques did not just inform readers about a product; they actively imbued brands with desirable qualities and enhanced their public image.

Hill’s first major change at the American Tobacco Company as president was to concentrate exclusively on the Lucky Strike brand. The old company policy of spending equal time and attention on the dozens of different products the ATC sold made it difficult to create strong, unified advertising campaigns. Hill had advocated

²² Stephen R. Fox, *The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and Its Creators*. (New York: Morrow, 1984), 50.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Lord & Thomas was originally hired by Percival Hill to work on a minor smoking tobacco brand called Blue Boar. After boosting the brand’s sales significantly in a short amount of time, he caught the attention of George Hill, at the time a vice-president of sales. When Hill came to power a year later, he retained Lasker’s services, transferring his agency to the more lucrative Lucky Strike account.

for this change before he was president, but had not been able to convince the company that this was a good idea. Writing that “you can’t survive unless you have one brand,” Lasker agreed, “because 80 or 90 percent of the cigarette business in this country today is on this one type of cigarette.” Arguing that other the ATC should think of their other tobacco products as different types of goods entirely, he continued: “instead of spending... a moderate amount of money on each of these products, milk them all. Take what you spend on them and the milking of their profits and put it in a big push behind Luckies.”²⁵ Hill also centralized the management organization of the ATC, moving independent managers off of other brands and making them district managers for Lucky Strike. When Hill launched unified advertising campaigns nationally, he needed a “single, flexible and compact organization” to implement them.²⁶

Along with American Tobacco’s decision to focus its time and resources on the Lucky Strike brand came a change in the company’s advertising. Though Albert Lasker was a professional advertiser and in charge of the Lucky Strike account, he still had to work with the indefatigable President Hill, who had more than a few of his own ideas about successful advertising. Fortunately, the two men agreed on many of the fundamentals like salesmanship-in-print and reason-why advertising. Learning from the initial success of the “Its Toasted” slogan in 1917, Hill believed that a good advertisement took a recognizable element from a product and then stressed it in copy and visuals. “We must first find some particular quality or *tangible attribute*, that is a

²⁵ Jeffrey L. Cruikshank and Arthur W. Schultz, *The Man Who Sold America: The Amazing (but True!) Story of Albert D. Lasker and the Creation of the Advertising Century*. (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2010), 251.

²⁶ Allen, “He Makes America Sit Up and Buy,” 14.

part of our actual product,” he wrote in a 1917 essay, and “this tangible information will give a foundation on which to build a *message* to be presented through all advertising.”²⁷ In this regard, Hill’s fundamental approach to advertising was very similar to Lasker’s. Both believed in concentrating advertising on a single product and a single message (or theme) for the product.

Hill and Lasker did not agree on everything, however. As one of his copywriters later recalled, Lasker “aimed at an appeal to reason and intelligence rather than the time-honored assumption that the public was a mass of dumb, driven sheep, which could be swayed with mere picture-and-catch-word.”²⁸ Hill, on the other hand, would often insist on using the large, flashy pictures and slogan that Lasker disliked. Though they both agreed that Lucky Strike needed a coherent theme, the two would constantly clash on the appearance and content in ad copy over the years. In his office, Hill and Lasker “often spent hours on a single piece of copy, blue penciling here, underlining there, changing a word, sharpening a headline.”²⁹ The advertisements that emerged from this revision process were a synthesis of Lasker’s rational arguments in ad copy and the sensational (sometimes even startling) images and slogans that Hill favored.³⁰

²⁷ The American Tobacco Company, *Lucky Strike Advertising*. (U.S.A.: The American Tobacco Company, 1938), 11.

²⁸ J. George Fredrick, *Masters of Advertising Copy: Principles and Practice of Copy Writers According to its Leading Practitioners*. (1925. Reprint, New York: Garland Publishing, 1985), 25.

²⁹ Lasker Death Recalls Famed Adman's Career." *Advertising Age* (June 9, 1952), 70.

³⁰ According to tobacco industry historian Richard Kluger, “Lasker was a shrewd and somewhat cynical foil to George Hill’s evangelical style of hucksterism, but they shared a basic belief in ‘reason why’ advertising that relied more on a product’s selling point of difference than brawny breast-beating.” Richard Kluger, *Ashes to Ashes: America's Hundred-Year Cigarette War, the Public Health, and the Unabashed Triumph of Philip Morris*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 76.

When Albert Lasker began working on the Lucky Strike account, George Hill had him build off of the existing “Its Toasted” slogan instead of creating a new one. Though it had proven popular at the start, years of repetition had dulled its effectiveness. Customers needed a convincing reason why Lucky Strike was not just a good product on its own, but was in fact superior to other brands. Before George Hill became ATC president, the only advertised merits of the toasting process were that it “added enjoyment” and that it developed “hidden flavors.”³¹ A vague claim that did little to separate Lucky Strike from other comparable brands, Lasker advised that the ATC freshen up the concept of toasting with what one historian has called “the trappings of scientific legitimacy.”³² After some deliberation and many hours of revision in his office, Hill’s first Lucky Strike campaign did just that.

In 1927, new Lucky Strike advertisements were published featuring a series of testimonials from prominent singers from the opera and stage asserting that Lucky Strike was the favorite cigarette of performers who needed to protect their voices. “Singers must be cautious regarding their throats,” one testimonial read, “Like other singers, I prefer Lucky Strikes because they are never irritating and because of their finer flavor.”³³ Advertising claims had expanded out of the realm of taste and now claimed that the technologically advanced toasting process actually improved a consumer’s health. Alongside the familiar “Its Toasted” slogan, a new phrase appeared in large underlined letters- “Your Throat Protection,” suggesting that the

³¹ “‘Because its Toasted,’ Lucky Strike advertisement.” *Nashua Telegraph*, April 15, 1926, 7.

³² Kluger, 76.

³³ For a comprehensive collection of historic cigarette advertisements, The Stanford School of Medicine’s Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising website has one of the largest online displays of the industry’s advertising throughout the 20th century. “Florence Easton Precious Voice Testimonial, 1927,” Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising.

toasting process now actively protected a smoker's health as well. For the first time, the ATC used modernity in their advertising to make the claim that Lucky Strike was more than just a good cigarette. Because of its modern qualities, ads asserted, it was actually superior to other brands on the market.

By using the concept of modernity, Lucky Strike advertising tried to separate itself from other cigarettes. Lucky Strike was a symbol of leisure, good health, and good taste- all attributes of the ATC vision of modernity. Suggesting that other brands that were not toasted did not have these positive qualities, the ATC made it clear that they were inferior and would not make consumers more modern.

Along with overt allusions to modernity and the benefits of technological progress, the Precious Voice campaign was significant because it was the first cigarette campaign to include women in its target audience. "We never dared talk about women smoking cigarettes, until...we had a series of testimonials of opera singers, and among others was Madame Schumann-Heink," George Hill later recounted, "she was the first woman that ever publically came out and testified that she smoked cigarettes."³⁴ Before the Precious Voice campaign, depictions of women in advertising only subtly suggested that they could and should smoke. Other brands had advertisements that could be interpreted as friendly to women in the mid 1920s, with slogans like Marlboro's "As Mild as May" and Chesterfield's images of women romantically gazing at their cigarette-puffing beaux.³⁵ However, women were never

³⁴ "How Hill Advertises is at Last Revealed." *Printers' Ink*, November 17, 1938, 93.

³⁵ Marlboro was one of the first cigarette brands to feature a filter tip, which was originally marketed as a way to help women avoid staining white cigarettes with their lipstick. In Chesterfield's popular 1926 series, images of romantically involved couples featured the slogan "Blow Some My Way," lacing cigarettes with a sexual intimacy and hint that the woman in the picture would soon be smoking cigarettes of her own off screen.

actually depicted smoking. They merely implied that the women in these ads desired men who smoked, and that if they did actually smoke, it was done privately in the home, away from the public eye.

But subtle suggestions did not suit George Hill, nor did they follow Lasker's reason-why method. Women had been buying cigarettes in increasing numbers since the First World War, and by the late 1920s were smoking millions annually.³⁶ Due to rigid social norms, however, women were traditionally barred from smoking in public. According to one report from 1927, New York City women would hire taxis or hide out in beauty parlors for the sole purpose of enjoying their cigarette without the scrutiny that came with it in the public sphere.³⁷ Lasker experienced this taboo personally when his wife Mary was chastised by a waiter and ordered to stop when she lit up in a restaurant, a surprise to the couple who regularly smoked together at home.³⁸ Observing that many women already wanted to smoke, Hill realized that this was an opportunity to double the numbers of Lucky Strike customers, and all he needed was an effective advertising campaign. Hill became convinced that the testimonial of opera singers and other well-known female performers were the key to attracting the smoking woman's attention, and quickly hired a number of celebrities such as actresses Helen Hayes and Constance Talmadge, and Ziegfeld Folly Myrna Darby to endorse Lucky Strikes. With their endorsements, smoking was advertised as sophisticated, feminine, and modern as the flappers that epitomized the decade.

³⁶ Borden, 227.

³⁷ "No Longer Hides Her Cigarette." *The New York Times Magazine*, August 28, 1927, 19.

³⁸ Cruikshank, 252.

By using testimonials, Hill and Lasker were following another larger trend seen in the advertising industry in the late 1920s. At the time, many felt that testimonials helped give ads a more personal and modern feel.³⁹ The influence of mass American culture intensified in the years after World War I, aided by the spread of nationally distributed films and other popular publications. For new generation of Americans who had grown up with movies and mass popular culture as a part of their daily lives, film stars and similar celebrities gained enormous authority and influence. “Our children,” claimed the cultural critic Norman Richardson in 1921, “are rapidly becoming what they see in the movies.”⁴⁰ These children were young adults with purchasing power by the end of the decade and Hill hoped that a testimonial from a respected actress would help make smoking acceptable for women. Stanley Resor, president of the J. Walter Thompson advertising firm argued at the time that Americans had demonstrated time and time again that they wanted their information, news, and entertainment conveyed through personalities or celebrities. He further said that Americans have always been in an eternal “search for authority,” which led them revere and respect whoever would best fill the traditional role of the aristocracy that the United States lacked.⁴¹ After the initial success of the Precious Voice campaign in 1927, American Tobacco continued to use testimonials from Americans prominent in many fields to advertise Lucky Strikes to men and women.

³⁹ Marchand, 96.

⁴⁰ Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies*. 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 125, 131.

⁴¹ Marchand, 96.

Star culture became a critical piece of the definition of modernity that American Tobacco imparted on Lucky Strike. As Americans continued to distance themselves from older Victorian emphasis on one's character and instead focused on personality, celebrities became a central figure in society. Through radio, national media publications, and especially film, Americans were constantly exposed to unordinary people whose special characteristics stood out from the rest of mass society. Radio and cinema's association with modern life made their celebrities clear representations of the modern "culture of personality," which in turn were co-opted by the ATC to imbue Lucky Strike with a sense of modernity and authority.⁴²

Along with the sales boost that was attributed to the new Lucky Strike advertising in Hill's opening years as president, the Precious Voice campaign and subsequent testimonial campaigns also created a significant amount of criticism and negative publicity. Ernestine Schumann-Heink, the first woman to endorse Lucky Strike (or for that matter any cigarette) publically soon after recanted her testimony and claimed that it was obtained through dubious means.⁴³ Often times it was revealed that celebrities were paid by American Tobacco for their testimony and often did not smoke Luckies, and sometimes did not even smoke at all.⁴⁴ Government investigation later revealed that Lasker had written to thousands of doctors asking if

⁴² According to cultural historian Warren Susman, "the importance of this contrast- the mass and the isolated individual [celebrity] apart from that mass- to the development of...the culture of personality, cannot be exaggerated." See Warren I. Susman, "'Personality' and the Making of Twentieth-Century Culture." In *New Directions in American Intellectual History*, edited by John Higham and Paul K. Conkin, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 222-223.

⁴³ *Advertising and Selling*, quoted in Marchand, 97.

⁴⁴ Riding the popularity wave generated by front page news, American Tobacco reportedly paid ship captain George Fried \$1,000 to claim that Lucky Strikes helped him calm his nerves during a well-publicized rescue-at-sea, despite the fact that he actually smoked Old Golds. *Tide Magazine*, quoted in Marchand, 100

they would sample a Lucky Strike cigarette and agree that that toasting process made it the least irritating brand to the throat. Doctors that responded favorably to Lucky Strike were given five free cartons of the cigarettes, and the ATC was able to publish ads that claimed “20,679 Physicians Say ‘Luckies are less irritating.’”⁴⁵ By the end of the 1920s, testimonials from sources of authority over-saturated print advertising and lost much of the respect it had with consumers.⁴⁶ As early as 1926, the advertising journal *Printer’s Ink* declared that “all testimonial is faked,” and later reported that a majority of consumers thought “the use of purchased testimonials is [not] good for advertising in general.”⁴⁷ But, the ATC was seeing results as they continued to advertise modernity with paid testimonials and questionable health claims in Lucky Strike.

Regardless of any irritation Lucky Strike advertising caused in consumers, sales surged as ads continued to link the cigarette to the theme of modernity. In many ways, Hill’s approach to advertising resembled the infamous “confidence men” (con man) of the 19th century- the swindlers and medicine peddlers who sold goods to an unsuspecting public through deception.⁴⁸ Conmen made the sale of commodities a performance with captivating movements, actions, and language designed to transform an ordinary object into one with magical qualities or powers. By fetishizing

⁴⁵ Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising. "20,679 Physicians, 1930."

⁴⁶ Fox, 116.

⁴⁷ *Printers’ Ink*, quoted in Marchand, 97 and Fox, 116. Also see "Advertising Gains Despite Its Faults: Expert Cites, Among Handicaps, Practices Which Strain Public Credulity." *The New York Times*, June 2, 1929, sec. N, 18.

⁴⁸ Lears, 99.

their wares, conmen brought the wonders of modernity to the consuming public.⁴⁹ Hill and Lasker gave the 19th century conman a 20th century update in their Lucky Strike campaigns. Instead of captivating the public with magic, Lucky Strike used science and the testimonials from authority to associate a banal product with extraordinary modern qualities. Though this was a new version of the confidence man, the use of these basic concepts- showmanship, product association with extraordinary value, and the appearance of a personal relationship between buyer and seller- demonstrate how American Tobacco chose to make Lucky Strikes modern.

The controversy and irritation that Lucky Strike advertising created in the late 1920s was no concern to George Hill. Publicity and discussion, whether it was positive or negative, was Hill's ultimate goal. Since thousands of current Lucky Strike smokers, salesmen, and retailers were spread across the United States, captivating advertisements gave people a reason to think about Lucky Strike and discuss it with their peers. When this conversation started, the ATC hoped, potential customers would be persuaded that Lucky Strike was a superior brand in a personal way. According to Hill, the print advertisement was the spark that would initiate discussion among consumers which would then convince them to buy Lucky Strike (See Figure 1).⁵⁰ Keeping Luckies in the news, regardless of the tone of the story,

⁴⁹ Rick Mitchell, "The Confidence Man: Performing the Magic of Modernity." *European Journal of American Culture* 23, no. 1 (January 1, 2004): 60. For more on Marx's theory of commodity fetishism and its links to modernity, see David Frisby. "Analyzing Modernity: Some Issues." In *Tracing Modernity: Manifestations of the Modern in Architecture and the City*, edited by Mari Hvattum and Christian Hermansen, 3-23. (New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁵⁰ Hill called this the "Selling Principle of Demonstration." In an essay he wrote in 1917 republished for his employees in 1938, he argued that if an advertising message is "unusual and arouses curiosity and interest, [consumers] are led to ask questions about it." If these potential customers were asking questions about Lucky Strike, he believed, they were bound to run into a retailer, salesman, or loyal Lucky Strike smoker who would then convince them to buy Lucky Strikes.

would sell cigarettes. Citing the surge in sales that accompanied these testimonial campaigns, Hill met with more admen in his ATC office again in 1928 to prepare for a new advertising campaign that would take the successful elements of the Precious Voice advertisements, and extend them even further.

Unfazed by the criticism of testimonials and dubious claims in Lucky Strike advertisements, Hill worked with Lasker to continue using technological progress, celebrity endorsement, and the New Woman to associate Luckies with modernity. In the months since Lucky Strike began directly targeting women in 1927, observers remarked that the taboo against women smoking in public had been significantly weakened.⁵¹ And in 1928, slimness was added to the list of modern qualities that the cigarettes claimed to have in a new campaign with a new slogan for Lucky Strike: “Reach for a Lucky.”

According to company lore, Hill created the Reach for a Lucky campaign after a chance observation he made on the streets of New York City. “I was riding out to my home, and I got to 110th street and Fifth Avenue; I was sitting in the car and I looked at the corner, and there was a great big stout lady chewing gum. And there was a taxicab...coming the other way,” Hill recalled. “There was a young lady in the taxicab with a long cigarette holder in her mouth, and she had a very good figure. But right then and there it hit me,” he continued, “there was the lady that was stout and chewing, and there was the young girl that was slim and smoking a cigarette.”⁵² It

If this system worked properly, advertising was supposed to be the spark that got public discussion of the cigarette started and would later lead to sales. *Lucky Strike Advertising*, 6-10.

⁵¹ In 1942 Neal Borden wrote that cigarette “advertising undoubtedly has played a part in speeding up social acceptance of women’s smoking and this in hastening a trend which had already been under way for some years preceding any appeals directly to women.” Borden, 227.

was at that moment that a catchy phrase entered George Hill's mind: "Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet."

Other accounts of this origin story credit Albert Lasker with the actual creation of this slogan, and others even credit the two with creating the slogan simultaneously and independently.⁵³ Regardless of which men had the original idea, Hill immediately approved the slogan and made it the new selling point in Lucky Strike advertising. The bulk of American Tobacco's advertising budget was thrown behind the new campaign. "Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet" suggested that Lucky Strikes were a healthy alternative to candy and other unhealthy foods. Similar to the Precious Voice campaign, here was another reason-why argument to convince ordinary women to smoke Luckies, and to smoke them more often. Lucky Strike was advertised as a product that could help consumers be more "modern," combining health concerns, slimness, and "female vanity" together in a single slogan.⁵⁴

It is likely that the stout woman Hill encountered on the street was black. In some versions of his story, she is referred to as a "negro." The intersection that Hill claimed the incident took place was on the edge of Harlem, a historically black neighborhood at the time. The negative associations that Hill assigned to the black chewing woman as opposed to the likely white woman in the taxi is one of the clearest examples of race's place in the ATC's vision of modernity. Although it was far from a perfect binary, blackness and whiteness were commonly viewed in

⁵² *Sold American!*, 75.

⁵³ An executive at Lord & Thomas' New York Office would later say that "Lasker said to me again and again... that Hill made no contributions to the advertising, that Lasker did it all." Cruikshank, 251, 254.

⁵⁴ Kluger, 77.

opposition to each other. Cinema, radio, and other forms of popular culture regularly used racial stereotypes to depict power relationships and make value statements. White was the opposite of black, just as civilized was the opposite of primitive and positive was to negative. Blackness' exclusion from modernity had "been embodied in the American subconscious" of the early 20th century.⁵⁵ From this origin story it is clear Hill believed that blackness was a sign of backwardness, and that it did not belong in a world with sophisticated and modern white consumers or Lucky Strike cigarettes.

In addition to these themes, Hill's account of the "Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet" origin reveals the socio-economic definitions of modernity that the ATC wanted to pair with Lucky Strike cigarettes. The intersection of 110th street and Fifth Avenue was not in a wealthy or affluent part of the city like Hill's office downtown.⁵⁶ The "stout lady" from Hill's apocryphal story is on foot, and likely a member of the working class. She is not riding in a taxi, a symbol of modern urban life. Her chewing disgusts Hill, who is relieved to see a modern, well-to-do woman smoking a cigarette. The fact that this slim young woman was also using a cigarette holder, a mark of class and wealth, furthers the clear division of class between her and her chewing counterpart. Even if the validity of this story is suspect, the fact that Hill wrapped the differences between cigarettes and rival products in class-oriented imagery reveals an important dimension in Lucky Strike advertising strategies.

⁵⁵ James Snead, *white screens/black images: Hollywood from the Dark Side*. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 2.

⁵⁶ A 1938 Home Owner's Loan Corporation map of Manhattan redlined this neighborhood, suggesting that it was a lower class and impoverished area.

Beginning in 1928, Lucky Strike advertisements appeared on billboards, newspapers, and magazines emblazoned with the slogan “Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet.” The campaign continued to use paid testimonials from celebrities and scientific authorities, but the most striking feature of the new campaign was its use of “competitive copy-“ direct attacks on another brand or product.⁵⁷ American Tobacco had stopped claiming that Lucky Strike was only the best cigarette, and now advertised that it was superior to other types of products as well. Focusing on the word “instead,” these new advertisements proposed that Lucky Strike was a modern alternative to candy. “Light a Lucky and you’ll never miss sweets that make you fat” claimed a 1929 testimonial from Constance Talmadge. After this shocking headline the body of the advertisement directly linked modernity to a person’s figure, claiming that “the smartest and loveliest women of the modern stage take this means of keeping slender... when others nibble fattening sweets, they light a Lucky.” The advertising copy also featured authoritative sounding advice that “a reasonable proportion of sugar in the diet is recommended, but the authorities are overwhelming that too many fattening sweets are harmful and that too many such are eaten by the American people.”⁵⁸

The Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet campaign targeted women much like the older Precious Voice testimonials had the previous year. Instead of throat protection, however, slenderness became the reason why Lucky Strike was a modern product. Candy, long associated with fat and weight gain, did not match the slender

⁵⁷ For more on competitive copy, see Marchand, 98.

⁵⁸ Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising. "Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet, 1929."

celebrities that graced the movie screen and pages of magazines. A slender body was a sign of health, just as excess weight was a visual confirmation that an individual was backwards. Lucky Strikes, American Tobacco argued, were necessary to meet the societal expectations for the slim, independent, fashionable, and-most importantly- modern woman.⁵⁹

The decision to include competitive copy in Lucky Strike advertising shocked many Americans, especially the advertising industry. The advertising trade press responded that these antagonizing claims were destroying public trust in advertising and American business. Controversial advertising such as this, critics claimed, drew attention towards the advertising process rather than the products being sold.⁶⁰ And the use of competitive copy, they warned, would spur retaliation from the candy industry as well. The critics were right. Angered by ads that claimed Luckies were “a delightful alternative for that craving for fattening sweets,” candy manufacturers released ads that called cigarettes poisonous and even fatal.⁶¹ According to one, Luckies were “nails in your coffin.”⁶² Criticism to new ads did not stop the ATC from using the “Reach for a Lucky” slogan. A few years later, Hill remarked that the

⁵⁹ The term “New Woman” was used in the 1920s to describe educated, independent, and career-minded women who were also concerned with feminism. For more on the New Woman in the post-19th amendment era, see Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*. (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1987; Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).

⁶⁰ Allan M. Brandt, *The Cigarette Century: The Rise, Fall, and Deadly Persistence of the Product that Defined America*. (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 73.

⁶¹ Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising. "George Gershwin Testimonial, 1929."

⁶² Philip Wagner, "Cigarettes vs. Candy. War Correspondence from a New Battle Front." *The New Republic*, February 13, 1929, 344.

controversy generated by the slogan made it “the best cigarette campaign of all time.”⁶³

As the advertising battle between American Tobacco and its critics raged, Lucky Strike sales rose at a meteoric rate. Selling fewer than 18 billion cigarettes in 1927, the Precious Voice campaign had helped boost Lucky Strike sales but did not bring them near the numbers of Camels or Chesterfields sold. The next year, aided by the Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet slogan, over 40 billion Luckies were sold, putting them right behind Camel on the sales charts.⁶⁴ That same year, the Federal Trade Commission began to investigate American Tobacco’s advertising practices. Pressured by lobbyists from the candy industry, FTC officials ordered the ATC not to buy any more testimonials from celebrities or to advertise Lucky Strikes as a weight-loss alternative to candy.⁶⁵ Forced to comply with the federal government, it seemed that George Hill had lost the ability to connect Lucky Strike to two important pieces of modernity.

But the FTC intervention was not the end of George Hill or Lucky Strike. New advertisements were quickly published by American Tobacco that promoted “moderation in all things” and simply encouraged Americans to “Reach for a Lucky.” Dropping all mentions of sweets or candy and maintaining a non-committal attitude towards Lucky Strike’s aid in weight loss, the new ads were able to subtly continue making the same weight-loss themes without violating any federal orders. In addition to the new slogan and copy, the “Reach for a Lucky” series featured what Roland

⁶³ "Lucky Strike Insures Chief for \$2,500,000." *Advertising Age*, August 13, 1932, 8.

⁶⁴ "The American Tobacco Co." *Fortune*, December 1936, 97.

⁶⁵ "The American Tobacco Co." *Forbes*, 156.

Marchand has called “visual blockbusters.” Images of slim and attractive young people were drawn with overweight and morbid looking shadows looming behind them.⁶⁶ “Avoid that future shadow by refraining from overindulgence, if you would maintain that modern figure of fashion,” the ads advised, “when tempted reach for a Lucky instead.”⁶⁷ Building off the notoriety of the earlier Lucky Strike ads, it was no secret that the theme and message remained unchanged from before.

The first four years of George Hill’s presidency at American Tobacco resulted in a flurry of controversial yet memorable ads. At their core, each advertisement in the “Precious Voice” testimonial series and both “Reach for a Lucky” weight-loss campaigns made the same assumptions about American consumers and modernity. Maintaining continuity in each new ad campaign allowed the ATC to build off previous claims and demonstrate Lucky Strike’s modern qualities in a variety of ways. By the end of the 1920s, the success of this advertising strategy had contributed to Lucky Strike’s rise to the top of the sales charts.⁶⁸ In the 1930s, however, new challenges emerged from the onset of the Great Depression that put Lucky Strike advertising to the test. Despite increased consumer suspicions of advertising, decreased spending power from customers, and a destructive price war with competitors, American Tobacco continued to advertise Lucky Strike with the same techniques that had brought success in Hill’s early years.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Marchand, 100.

⁶⁷ Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising, "'Avoid that Future Shadow,' 1930'."

⁶⁸ In 1930, Lucky Strike sold 42.6 billion cigarettes, over 4 billion more than Camel and more than 17 billion over Chesterfield. Borden, 229.

Centralizing Lucky Strike advertising on the same theme and target audience helped American Tobacco sell more cigarettes, and at the same time allowed the company to actually reduce its total advertising expenditure. This would be critical to their success during the Great Depression. “I don’t believe I’m wrong in believing the power of the printed word is created in times of great sales resistance then when everything is rosy and people need not give such careful attention to the expenditure of every penny,” Hill quipped in 1932- one of the darkest years of the Depression. “We are ourselves are going after the cigarette market harder than ever before,” he insisted, determined to convince Americans that Lucky Strike cigarettes were an essential part of modern life.⁷⁰

Throughout the decade, Lucky Strike ads continued to target women and use provocative or shocking copy to attract consumers. Other cigarette manufacturers were slow to include women in their ads and focused almost exclusively on health and price benefits instead.⁷¹ Hill’s aggressive style of advertising was also cheaper. In the 1930s American Tobacco spent less on advertising per cigarette sold than their rivals spent on Camel or Chesterfield. According to Neil Borden, an expert observer of the advertising industry, the effectiveness of Lucky Strike advertising techniques

⁶⁹ According to Roland Marchand, “on the strength of Hill’s aggressive advertising [in the late 1920s] the company had built up a sales momentum that defied the onset against the depression.” Marchand, 102.

⁷⁰ “Depression is Proof of Power of Advertising,” *Advertising Age* (January 9, 1932): 5.

⁷¹ Camel was slow to approach the subject of women’s smoking; company executives had a much more conservative view of women and did not think it was appropriate to include them in advertising until they were compelled to respond to Lucky Strike’s sales success in the early 1930s. R.J. Reynolds spent most of the decade trying to debunk Lucky Strike’s toasting claims and promoting Camel’s alleged health benefits with slogans such as “Get a Lift With Camel” and “Camels agree With Me.” Camel would overtake Lucky Strike in total sales occasionally during the Great Depression, but Lucky Strike averaged more sales annually and did so with a substantially smaller advertising budget. Nannie Tilley, *The R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company*. (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 337-344. Also see Figure 1 and 2.

were far more important than the size of its budget, and was the reason for the company's success.⁷²

Though Lucky Strike advertising remained linked with the idea of modernity as it had in the 1920s, the images and copy that presented this theme would often change as Hill and other advertisers rapidly introduced and retired ad campaigns throughout the 1930s. Hill believed that "advertising of a...cigarette must be news and that even the best story wears out quickly after three months' use." Recalling the problems that Lucky Strike faced before he was president, Hill would never be allowed to become stale in the public's mind, no matter what. "Ten weeks is his limit for a newspaper campaign," one analyst said, "and he thinks a rest of equal length, during which consumers can speculate as to what Lucky Strike will do next, is advisable."⁷³ Hill wanted to serialize Lucky Strike's connection with modernity: benefits to health, the slimming qualities of cigarettes, and association with popular authority figures. Once these themes were cemented in the public's mind, he believed, successive ad campaigns would build off them while appearing new and exciting at the same time.⁷⁴

While wide-spread public knowledge of the medical risks involved with smoking would not become available until the early 1960s, the American public was generally aware that cigarettes did pose some hazards and could irritate the throat and

⁷² American Tobacco sold on average 37.9 billion Lucky Strikes annually in the 1930s, and paid an average of \$7.5 million each year to advertise, a stark contrast from R.J. Reynolds and Liggett & Meyers. Borden, 242-246.

⁷³ "Lucky Strike Insures Chief for \$2,500,000," 8.

⁷⁴ *Lucky Strike Advertising*, 13.

lungs or leave a bitter aftertaste.⁷⁵ This is reflected in the great efforts that American Tobacco (and other cigarette manufacturers) took to sell their brands as a “lighter smoke” that was easy on the throat. Evoking technical innovations and the expertise of doctors and other “experts,” Lucky Strike advertising continued to build off of the success of the “Precious Voice” and “Reach for a Lucky” campaigns and claim health benefits. Targeting Americans eager to fit into a healthy, attractive, and modern lifestyle, Hill approved a number of striking ad campaigns based on the links between personal health and modernity.

Responding to recent research indicating that exposure to ultra-violet rays led to health benefits (including resistance to disease), 1931 saw the first changes to the Lucky Strike production process since the brand’s birth in 1917.⁷⁶ Using sun lamps to heat raw tobacco with ultra-violet rays, George Hill fabricated another modern innovation that would associate Lucky Strike with modernity and better health. That year, a series of new ads featuring slender and tanned women enjoying the sunny outdoors were published nationally in periodicals and outdoor advertisements.⁷⁷ Featuring the slogan “Sunshine Mellows- Heat Purifies,” these ads were able to continue promoting Lucky Strike as modern and respond to popular new trends at the same time. With the words “Sunshine Mellows,” the ad reminded readers that

⁷⁵ For more on the public’s knowledge of the risks of smoking in the early 20th century, see *The Cigarette Century*.

⁷⁶ Michael R. Albert, and Kristen G. Ostheimer, "The Evolution of Current Medical and Popular Attitudes Toward Ultraviolet Exposure." *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* 48, no. 6 (June 2003): 909-918.

⁷⁷ The first Lucky Strike advertisement to mention the use of ultra-violet rays in the toasting process was released in 1930, containing the picture of philanthropist August Heckscher and his endorsement of the health benefits of sunlamp toasting. The “Sunshine Mellows” line and images of girls in the sun would be introduced in 1931, and carried in American papers and magazines until 1932.

sunlight provides many benefits and a healthy constitution. The second half of the slogan: “Heat Purifies” followed up this association by suggesting that the artificial light and heat created by ultra-violet rays actually improved on the sun’s benefits and purified and sanitized Lucky Strike tobacco more than natural processes (or any rival brand) ever could. At the bottom of each advertisement, the old slogan “Its Toasted” appeared prominently, to provide continuity to older Lucky Strike ads and claim that the toasting process was actually an important medical innovation.⁷⁸ Keeping with their strategy of short advertising campaigns, this series was retired only a few months later in 1931, and was followed by new ads that echoed the same associations with modernity.⁷⁹

As the depression rolled on, George Hill’s commitment to aggressive advertising remained, and new advertisements continued to stir up the same connections to modernity that the “Precious Voice” and “Reach for a Lucky” campaigns had. Despite the best efforts of the ATC, the cigarette continued to suffer from association with ugliness in the 1930s. Clouds of smoke, coughing, unpleasant smells- these were not the key words of modernity in an American society increasingly concerned with sanitation and good health. One 1932 Lucky Strike campaign attempted maneuver around this difficulty by asking customers one question: “Do You Inhale?” Every smoker inhales their cigarette smoke, each ad in the series declared, so it is important to know that the ingredients in a cigarette are

⁷⁸ During the earlier campaigns of the late 1920s, the superiority of the tobacco used in Lucky Strike was what made the cigarette lighter and easier on the throat. The toasting process was not linked directly to making the tobacco healthier until ultraviolet rays were added to the process.

⁷⁹ The ATC also released a series of Lucky Strike ads with the slogan “Consider Your Adam’s Apple!!” in 1931 that featured Ziegfeld Follies and made the same claims about ultra-violet rays and health benefits. The series was retired after six months at the end of the year. Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising. “Consider Your Adam’s Apple!!,” 1931.”

clean and safe. “For years there has been generally a striking avoidance of the word ‘inhale’ in cigarette advertising,” the copy continued, but thanks to the toasting process and ultra-violet light, Lucky Strike was not afraid to bring up the question.⁸⁰

Responding to this new challenge to the cigarette industry, critics were quick to condemn the new ads as vulgar and frightening. “Now that Lucky Strikes have gone into the fear copy division,” one journal wrote in reply, “some of the more timorous souls are going to be afraid to breathe.”⁸¹ Discussing a subject long considered by the public to be taboo elicited responses similar to the “Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet” ads from the late 1920s. And like the older ads, the “Do You Inhale?” campaign was followed by an increase in sales soon after.

Though most Lucky Strike ads were considered successful by the ATC and George Hill, the campaign released immediately after the “Do You Inhale?” series was ultimately seen as a failure. Featuring lions vibrant drawings of animals and people, Lucky Strike ads had a new message: “Nature in the Raw is Seldom Mild.” In these ads the forces of nature were personified as fearsome lions, savage warriors, and blood-thirsty Indians. On its own, nature was dangerous, often times fatal. “The fact is, we never overlook the truth that ‘Nature in the Raw is Seldom Mild,’” the ads read, “so these fine tobaccos, after proper aging and mellowing, are then given the benefit of that Lucky Strike purifying process.”⁸² American Tobacco’s modern

⁸⁰ Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising, "Do You Inhale?," 1932."

⁸¹ "Trade Suffers Jitters From 'Inhale' Copy," *Advertising Age* (May 7, 1932): 3, and "Rough Proofs." *Advertising Age* 3, no. 18 (May 7, 1932): 1.

⁸² Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising, "Nature in the Raw is Seldom Mild, 1932."

manufacturing techniques took any danger out of natural tobacco, and turned it into a safe and modern product.

While the “Nature in the Raw” series did continue to embrace the same vision of modernity as previous Lucky Strike advertising, George Hill later admitted that the ads were too abstract and difficult for the public to understand easily. The connections between modernity and Lucky Strike were not immediately apparent, nor did they incorporate medical/scientific authority or link the cigarette with popular celebrities. Having the modernity theme was not enough it seemed; advertising needed to use the same techniques and approaches that consumers expected. After sales of Lucky Strike dropped by several billion cigarettes that year, Hill called the campaign a “poor idea.”⁸³ Learning from this experience, American Tobacco quickly returned with new campaigns that did a better job focusing on the modernity theme in a way that was easier for consumers to understand.

Learning from the failure of the “Nature in the Raw” series, American Tobacco tried to clearly link Lucky Strike advertising to past slogans that had improved sales. Romantic illustrations of couples in various settings highlighted the new campaign. There was no advertising copy, only slogans such as “Just One More” and “No More Need be Said.” These ads combined sexual allure with images of purity, beauty, and leisure as previous campaigns had in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Hill spared no expense on artwork, hiring such commercial artists as Hayden Hayden and Howard Chandler Christy to create characters who were sexually

⁸³ *Sold American!*, the self-promoting history of the American Tobacco Company published in 1954 rarely mentions any failures or mistakes that the company or any of its officers made. The fact that the book singles out the “Nature in the Raw” campaign as a notable failure is significant and demonstrates the impact it had on the company. *Sold American!*, 83.

appealing and desirable.⁸⁴ Readers could have easily mistaken these figures for Clark Gable, Claudette Colbert, or the other many celebrities who had appeared in Lucky Strike testimonial ads in the past.

As the 1930s drew to a close and the Great Depression began to wane, sales of Lucky Strike rose even higher than they had in Hill's early years as president, a fact that he attributed to effective advertising strategies. In his first few years, Lucky Strike burst onto the national scene with advertising that captured the public's attention and shocked them with direct appeals to women and claims that other products on the market were toxic and dangerous. These campaigns were the first to advertise Lucky Strike as an essential tool for Americans to maintain a modern lifestyle. Once sales and interest sales had been jump started with the "Precious Voice" and "Reach for a Lucky" campaigns, the company's rapid-fire campaigns in the 1930s kept returning to the same proven theme of modernity without fail, milking it for all it was worth without appearing stale in the public eye.

The critical piece of the Lucky Strike advertising of this era was not simply that the cigarette was described as modern, but that all advertising that the American Tobacco Company created was centralized under this theme. In essence, the same message about Lucky Strike was being repeated over and over to Americans for close to fifteen years. George Hill and American Tobacco's stubborn insistence on following this strategy, much to the chagrin of critics and competitors alike, was a result of their belief in a mass American audience that would respond best to advertising if it was uniform and consistent. Modernity was a malleable concept, and the ATC was able to manipulate it and associate it with Lucky Strike from many

⁸⁴ Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising, "Couples in Love Series, 1932."

different angles without changing the basic concept. But ultimately modernity was the tool that American Tobacco used to reach the mass American audience. Whenever Hill or even the ATC looked back on their advertising in the 1920s and 1930s, they always judged campaigns based on their ability to attract and persuade the mass audience that Lucky Strike was modern. The brand's quick rise to popularity after Hill became president and its reliable high sales figures afterwards, they believed, was due to the mass audience's response to their effective advertising.

Chapter 2: The Gospel of Smoke: Intertextuality among Mediums of Lucky Strike Advertising, 1927-1940

A common criticism of Lucky Strike advertising was that it was too blatant.

From the repetitive sales messages on radio programs sponsored by the cigarette brand to the intrusive ads plastered across popular newspapers and magazines, it was difficult to avoid exposure to Lucky Strike advertising in the United States by the late 1930s. “I am very much worked up over the fact that the cigarette people are employing the radio to broadcast information that tends to corrupt the morals of my little son,” one New York listener complained in 1931, “cigarettes, in my opinion, do enough harm as it is, without spending thousands of dollars to make the use of a blessing such as radio to spread the awful habit.”⁸⁵ By itself, mass advertising through print and radio threatened to drive away the very consumers that American Tobacco was targeting. But radio and print were not the only methods the American Tobacco Company used in this period. Largely unbeknownst to the American public, Lucky Strike cigarettes were also advertised in a variety of alternative, or non-traditional, ways that attempted to sway the consumer public’s opinions in subtle ways. When George Washington Hill became president of the American Tobacco Company in 1926, cigarettes were still relatively new and not totally accepted by the American public. Women, rural Americans, members of the socio-economic elite, and a number of other demographic groups were restricted from purchasing cigarettes either by taboos enforced from within their own groups or from American society at large, placing serious restrictions on Lucky Strike and other domestic cigarette sales.

⁸⁵ Orrin E. Dunlap Jr., *Radio In Advertising*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1931), 96.

Along with print and radio, Lucky Strike was advertised to Americans through public relations, product placement, participation in public events, and other means that were not as noticeable or direct. These “alternative” advertising methods often times did not advertise Lucky Strike expressly. Instead they promoted general cigarette use or highlighted themes and feelings that traditional advertising associated with the brand. But what alternative forms of advertising lacked in straightforwardness they made up for by strengthening and intertextualizing print and radio ads. This process created a web of different types of advertising mediums that all corresponded to each other.

The strength of alternative advertising techniques lay in their ability to unify advertisements that were separated by location and communicated in intrinsically different ways. Instead of relying on print, radio, or an alternative form of advertising to persuade consumers to buy Luckies by itself, American Tobacco made different advertising mediums reinforce each other. Public relations, product placement in film, and public displays at events like the 1939 New York World’s Fair served to create a sophisticated and intertextual advertising system that consistently supported Lucky Strike simultaneously in different areas of American society. American Tobacco believed that if it could integrate these different mediums and incorporate them altogether into their advertising, then Americans would be more persuaded to buy Lucky Strikes. Though alternative forms of advertising was often subtle or restrained in its direct appeals to customers, its function was more to manipulate public opinion and help make explicit advertising more effective. Intertextualized advertising, the company believed, would allow them to make Lucky Strike cigarettes a part of mass

American society itself. Instead of changing Lucky Strike advertising to fit existing American society, intertextuality was the ATC's attempt to change society to fit around Lucky Strike instead.

“Intertextuality” is not a term typically found in advertising histories, nor was it the word that George Hill or any of his contemporaries used to label the advertising strategies that they developed in the late 1920s. In recent decades, marketers have adopted the term “integrated marketing communication” (IMC) to refer to advertisements in different media that are intended to correspond to each other. On the other hand, intertextuality is a term used in literary analysis and refers to the constructed relationships between texts in the same medium.⁸⁶ George Hill did not think of radio, print, film, or product placement as isolated mediums; he grouped them all together under the banner of “advertising” so that the ATC could exploit the connections between each. Lucky Strike advertising was like an arrow flying towards the consumer, he once explained. The advertising theme was the arrowhead, and each type of advertisement “must be lined behind that...all streamlined.”⁸⁷ To emphasize the rhetorical and thematic connections that existed between different types of Lucky Strike advertising, and the ATC's belief that each type was an integrated part of the same medium, will be used to describe this advertising strategy instead of IMC.

Historians and marketers usually place the theoretical and conceptual origins of IMC in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Citing the atomization of media types such

⁸⁶ When the term “intertextuality” was first used by scholars in the mid-1960s, it proposed that texts could be dynamic sites “in which relational processes and practices are the focus of analysis instead of static structures and products.” Jesus Martinez Alfaro, Maria, “Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept.” *Atlantis* 18, no. 1/2 (June 1996): 268-85.

⁸⁷ *Lucky Strike Advertising*, 49.

as television and print media into highly specific advertising vehicles targeted to niche groups, IMC emerged out of the public relations field as a way to express one unified message through a number of specialized mediums.⁸⁸ In 1993, just two years after the term “IMC” was first accepted by the marketing community, the concept was described as “a new way of looking at the whole, where once we only saw parts...it’s realigning communications to look at it the way the customer sees it- as a flow of information from indistinguishable sources.”⁸⁹ These same words can be used to describe the intertextual advertising that American Tobacco developed in the first half of the twentieth century, though these advertisements have never been recognized in this way.⁹⁰

In order to understand the intersections between American popular culture and advertising, it is important to recognize intertextual Lucky Strike advertising as an early form of IMC. The role of the cigarette and smoking were shaped by many forces within the tobacco industry and in American society at large, and American Tobacco sought to harness all of these to improve sales. In this period Americans were beginning to experience a variety of new technological and cultural developments, and none of these were left untouched by American Tobacco. The large advertising appropriations American Tobacco spent intertextualizing its

⁸⁸ John M. McGrath, "IMC at a Crossroads: A Theoretical Review and a Conceptual Framework for Testing." *Marketing Management Journal* 15, no. 2 (2005): 55.

⁸⁹ Don E. Schultz, Stanley I. Tannenbaum, and Robert F. Lauterborn, *Integrated Marketing Communications*. (Chicago: NTC Business Books, 1993), xvii.

⁹⁰ A handful of marketers have rejected claims that IMC was a new innovation near the end of the 20th century and that its basic principles existed as far back as the 1950s. For a succinct account of the debate over the history of IMC, see Harlan E. Spotts, David R. Lambert, and Mary L. Joyce, "Marketing Deja Vu: The Discovery of Integrated Marketing Approach." *Journal of Marketing Education* 20, no. 3 (1998).

advertising and integrating it into society also helped normalize corporate intervention in American life for the rest of the 20th century.

When George Hill assumed the presidency, he introduced a number of new advertising techniques to promote the Lucky Strike brand. But more importantly, Hill made sure that these techniques of advertising always reinforced each other to create a highly effective form of advertising synergy. By no means was George Hill the only actor in this story; there were many employees of the American Tobacco Company and the outside agencies they hired that dreamed up and created the alternative forms of advertising that put Lucky Strike at the top of the sales charts. But, Hill was willing to spend large sums of money to fund these advertising campaigns (though some failed or were not worth the risk) when his peers in other cigarette companies were not.⁹¹ In this chapter, George Hill, Edward Bernays, and a few other names appear often when in fact were also many anonymous and forgotten junior executives and businessmen who were also critical to Lucky Strike's success in this period. Though their names are not mentioned in this chapter, Hill could not have advertised Lucky Strike in such an effective way without them.

After Hill assumed total control of American Tobacco following the death of his father, Percival Hill, he immediately began dramatic changes to the way the company advertised Lucky Strike (see Chapter 1). Along with focusing American Tobacco's advertising resources exclusively on the Lucky Strike brand and introducing a range of new advertising tactics, Hill quickly moved to make public relations a central pillar in his advertising. In the late 1920s, public relations remained

⁹¹ Edward L. Bernays, *Biography of an Idea: Memoirs of Public Relations Counsel Edward L. Bernays*, (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1965), 377.

a new field in which many manufacturers and businesses were reluctant to involve themselves in. Perhaps this is why Hill did not incorporate it into Lucky Strike advertising until after he saw public relations' impact firsthand- being used by a rival to weaken Lucky Strike advertising. Lucky Strike's first encounter with public relations was through Edward Bernays, often referred to as the "father of public relations."⁹²

Bernays, the nephew of and disciple of Sigmund Freud, saw himself as a psychoanalyst for corporations and institutions. He specialized in engineering social attitudes and norms in order to win the support of the general public.⁹³ Bernays defined public relations as the "engineering of consent" from the public. His 1947 essay of the same name identified the three elements that were vital to each public relations campaign he designed. The first part was an understanding that the consuming public is a raw material to be studied and then manipulated by advertisers. Second, was Bernays' belief that the most effective way to influence the public was through emotional appeals. And finally, as he explained it, "the engineer of consent must create news." News stories could be fabricated or described by public relations agents in order to 'shape the attitudes and actions of people.'⁹⁴

In 1927, Liggett & Myers hired Bernays to promote their Chesterfield brand. He began by using front groups, press releases, staged public events, and other similar techniques to attack Lucky Strike, which was a rival brand at the time. But, after a

⁹² Stuart Ewen, *PR!: A Social History of Spin*. (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 3.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

⁹⁴ Edward L. Bernays, "The Engineering of Consent." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 250 (March 1947): 119. Also see Ewen, 377-380.

few months Liggett & Myers decided not to extend Bernays's contract, the public relations pioneer was quickly hired by George Hill with the understanding that he would not work for any other businesses that sold tobacco products.⁹⁵ Hill also hired Ivy Lee, another pioneer in the field of public relations in this same period with the same agreement that he would also not advise any other tobacco companies on public relations. "If I have both of you," he explained to Bernays, "my competitors can't get either of you."⁹⁶ By 1928, George Hill had a virtual monopoly on public relations talent in the United States, and wasted no time using it to make Lucky Strike advertising more effective than rival brands.

In order to increase sales of Lucky Strike, Bernays believed it was most important to focus on changing larger patterns of societal behavior among Americans, instead of simply focusing on buying habits and brand loyalty. These larger patterns were chosen from the various themes that American Tobacco used in their traditional advertising. If Bernays could make a concept such as the medical benefits of smoking or slenderness popular in their own right, then it was far more likely that consumers would react positively to these same themes when they saw them featured prominently in print and radio advertisements.

Bernays' first assignment for George Hill was to open up American women to the cigarette market and Lucky Strike. Women had long been a target for Hill, who became the first major cigarette manufacturer to openly advertise to women with the

⁹⁵ R.L. Stobridge, chief advertising agent for Liggett & Myers claimed that "they haven't been educated to move ahead in public relations," despite the success that Bernays had using it against Lucky Strike in 1927. Bernays, 376.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 381.

1927 “Precious Voice” campaign.⁹⁷ By using famous opera women as celebrity endorsers, Lucky Strike did improve its sales volume among women who already smoked. However, cigarettes were still considered a masculine product and women were banned from smoking in most public places. Attributing the growth in female smoking to more degeneracy and the loss of “femininity,” many Americans viewed the practice as “unlady-like. Any woman who dared smoke outside the privacy of her homes risked criticism or worse.⁹⁸ Though ideas about gender were changing in the 1920s, the taboo against women smoking was disintegrating too slowly for Hill. With Bernays, he believed that intertextualized public relations and regular advertising could spur public acceptance of women’s cigarette use. “They’re smoking indoors,” Hill confessed, “but, damn it, if they spend half the time outdoors and we can get ‘em to smoke outdoors, we’ll damn near double our female market.”⁹⁹ The profits to be made unifying men and women together into a single community of smokers demanded immediate action and a new advertising strategy.

In 1928, the same year he began working for American Tobacco, Bernays published *Propaganda*, in which he laid out many of the public relations techniques that he would soon use to bolster Lucky Strike advertising. Many of these closely resembled the methods that Hill used in print and radio advertising (or would develop in the near future), which was an essential part of creating an intertextual web of Lucky Strike advertisements that linked all different types of mediums and

⁹⁷ H.L. Stephen, “How Hill Advertises is at Last Revealed,” *Printer’s Ink*, November 17, 1938, 93.

⁹⁸ Borden, 224-227.

⁹⁹ Bernays, 383.

advertising approaches. “The group mind does not think in the strict sense of the word. In place of thoughts it has impulses, habits and emotions. In making up its mind its first impulse is usually to follow the example of a trusted leader,”¹⁰⁰ Bernays wrote, arguing that the control of symbols and sources of authority were the best ways to persuade the masses to act in a particular way. In his work for American Tobacco, he would attempt to use public relations to control these sources of influence and align them with print and radio Lucky Strike advertising.

Before Lucky Strike advertising was strengthened with public relations efforts, it tried to attract new female customers through a focus on slenderness. This was clear with the infamous slogan “Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet” that Hill introduced in 1929. And so after advertising that Lucky Strike cigarettes were a healthy and slimming alternative to desserts and other foods that contributed to weight gain, Hill and Bernays decided to use public relations in two ways to reinforce the “Reach for a Lucky” campaign: through health and fashion. Rejecting older Victorian standards of health and beauty, advertisers had begun portraying slenderness as the ideal body type in the early 20th century, but this transition was not yet complete in the late 1920s.¹⁰¹ If public relations techniques could promote the health and fashion benefits of slimmness, then ads that made Lucky Strike essential to a slender body would be much more persuasive.

Bernays began publicizing the links between slenderness and cigarettes through fashion designers and photographers. Preferring to keep his own name out of any publicity created for any of his clients, he instead opted to have figures already

¹⁰⁰ Edward L. Bernays, *Propaganda*, (New York: Horace Liveright, 1928), 50.

¹⁰¹ Lears. *Fables of Abundance*, 167.

established within the fashion industry work on his behalf. Authority figures such as Charles Dana Gibson (noted artist and creator of the famed “Gibson Girl”) and Nancy Hardin, editor of the *Vogue*, were hired by Bernays and sent letters to other influential artists and photographers.¹⁰² These letters praised women who smoked instead of eating sweets and asked them to support the “ideal of slimness.”¹⁰³ At the same time, Bernays sent these letters and articles secretly written by himself sent to newspapers, magazines, and other media outlets. Members of the fashion industry seeking to stay current and follow the new trend of slenderness that Bernays was publicizing in the press quickly began featuring slender models and slimmer standards of beauty in their own work. “The ideal American woman of fashion is slim and she should do everything in her power to retain her supple graceful figure,” one article ghostwritten by Bernays claimed, “that, at least, is the view of leading fashion experts in this country and Canada.”¹⁰⁴ At the same time, under Bernays’ direction American Tobacco began paying high-class clothing stores to feature Lucky Strike cigarettes in their fashion displays. Bonwit Teller, a popular department store on New York City’s 5th Avenue, exhibited packages of Lucky Strikes next to their latest Parisian gowns. Events like these were highly publicized by Bernays and his contacts in national media, claiming that “it is significant from the women’s angle, say leading stylists, that [a 5th Avenue department store] should combine with Lucky Strike to bring this

¹⁰² Edward Bernays to R.W. Richards, 23 May, 1929, Series I, Box 88, Folder 2, Edward L. Bernays Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Nancy Hardin to Edward Bernays, Bernays Papers, Series I, Box 86, Folder 1.

¹⁰³ Bernays, *Biography of an Idea*, 383.

¹⁰⁴ “Draft of ‘American Woman’s Slender Figure Important Influence on World Fashions,’” Bernays Papers, Series I, Box 86, Folder 1.

new idea of style and smoking to the women of America.”¹⁰⁵ Through Bernays’ publicity tactics and the financial resources and influence of the American Tobacco Company, the cigarette was being shaped into a symbol of high fashion and modern beauty, in precisely the same way as Lucky Strike advertisements claimed.

Along with creating positive publicity for the slender figure, Bernays and Hill used public relations to create a negative image of candy and dessert foods, focusing on sugar as a harmful substance that caused obesity and other health issues. In late 1928 when Lucky Strike advertising copy began to stress moderation in fat intake (accomplished by smoking cigarettes) as a means to achieve a slender figure, Bernays moved to publicize the idea of moderation in the public mind. Moderate diets were promoted through the media and through a number of authoritative figures under Bernays’ influence. Hill and Bernays would not go as far as to actually fabricate entire stories about the dangers of sugar or the slimming abilities of cigarettes, but they did exaggerate and distort statements and opinions given from medical authorities in order to make them fall in line with their anti-fat agenda. Hill personally sent copies of Dr. Clarence Leib’s 1929 book *Eat, Drink, and be Slender* to medical journals, newspapers, and industry officials as proof that excess sugar in a diet was unhealthy and dangerous.¹⁰⁶ Also, health commissioners and other medical figures were paid by American Tobacco to promote Dr. Leib’s book and warn of the dangers of sugar as a public health issue, furthering the negative image that sugar held in the

¹⁰⁵ Distribution Copy of “Cigarettes Go Fifth Avenue,” 1932, Bernays Papers, Series I, Box 84, Folder 4.

¹⁰⁶ Though Leib’s book does briefly note that “a cigarette makes an excellent filler-in and substitute for a course which our obesity diet excludes,” there are few mentions of tobacco or cigarettes throughout. Most of the book is spent criticizing sugar, which Leib calls “your arch enemy” Clarence W. Leib, *East, Drink and Be Slender: What Every Overweight Person Should Know and Do*. (New York: John Day Company, 1929), 145, 130.

public's view.¹⁰⁷ With the danger and ugliness that sugar brought, Lucky Strike ads that offered a modern, rational substitute to sugar became all the more appealing, despite the fact that anti-sugar publications rarely even mentioned tobacco as a positive alternative.

In Bernays' autobiography, he mentions that Hill and other advertising executives at American Tobacco did not always agree with his advice. In order to strengthen public support for the "moderation" theme in Lucky Strike advertisements, Bernays proposed an extensive, long-term campaign that would have funded the creation of a Moderation League and promoted moderation in all aspects of life (especially in the diet) over a period of years. But as he quickly learned, "Hill was not at receptive to my comprehensive plan for a broad, integrated moderation campaign; he was only interested in...specific action." Surprised, Bernays condescendingly wrote that Hill and his advertising staff "tend[ed] to regard intermediate and long-range planning as impractical, eccentric and a nuisance... They want[ed] *ad hoc* action."¹⁰⁸ But what Bernays did not understand about Hill's advertising was its tendency to change quickly. Since Hill treated his advertisements like news stories and, he feared the public would grow tired of them quickly and never used an advertising campaign long enough for it to fade from public interest.¹⁰⁹ Publicity,

¹⁰⁷ Though many readers read these anti-sugar publications with an uncritical eye, educated and careful readers regularly saw it for the business propaganda it was. In response to one circular issued by Dr. S. G. Jett, the Health Commissioner of Reidsville, North Carolina (also the location of many of American Tobacco's factories and facilities), one doctor wrote "I think the circular and letter a disgrace to the cause of public health. It is clearly advertising propaganda- - using his position as health commissioner to promote the use of the cigarettes." Ennion Williams to J.M. Harman, December 29, 1928, Bernays Papers, Series I, Box 87, Folder 12.

¹⁰⁸ Bernays, *Biography of an Idea*, 385.

¹⁰⁹ "Lucky Strike Insures Chief for \$2,500,000." *Advertising Age*, August 13, 1932, 8.

then, would have to be designed with the same principles in mind. A long-term campaign like the one that Bernays favored would take months or even years to take hold of the public. And though eventually a long-term publicity campaign might do more to sway the public opinion on moderation and make it more receptive to the moderation theme, American Tobacco could have moved on to use a different theme by then. Hill kept public relations on the same pace with other Lucky Strike advertising. It was the unity between the two that made them effective.

Instead of creating a Moderation League as he had originally advised, Bernays turned to dramatic media events to keep the moderation theme in the public mind. Turning again to authority figures that consumers trusted and admired, the famous Ziegfeld Follies were enlisted in a publicity stunt that promoted moderation and bashed sugar and other products that competed with cigarettes. In late 1929, six Ziegfeld Follies came to the glamorous Ritz-Carlton Hotel in New York City, and publically announced that they were establishing the “Ziegfeld Contour, Curve and Charm Club.” Reciting a pledge that was actually written by Bernays, each woman promised that “I pledge myself to slenderness...I renounce the false pleasures of the table—fattening foods, drinks, and cloying sweets, but I make no sacrifice: I shall smoke cigarettes.”¹¹⁰ Making sure that the national media was well informed of the staged event, Bernays sent out press releases and made sure that a number of reporters were on hand to witness the event. The Follies were at the height of their fame in the late 1920s, following the successful run of the stage play *Whoopie!* which had been performed in hundreds of locations nation-wide. As the Follies continued to

¹¹⁰ Distribution copy of “Whoopie Beauties Sign Florenz Ziegfeld Anti-Fat Agreement,” Bernays Papers, Series I, Box 84, Folder 4.

tour the United States, they now became arbiters of moderation and self-control and implicit supporters of cigarettes. Not coincidentally, that same year George Hill ran a series of print advertisements that featured several members of the Ziegfeld Follies proclaiming that it was “better to light a Lucky whenever you crave fattening sweets.”¹¹¹

The Ziegfeld moderation event served to combine positive cigarette publicity and association with health and fashion, recognized sources of trusted authority, national visibility, and an intertextual link between advertising and current news and popular culture in a single event. “Beyond all reasonable doubt...they are the fashion arbiters of the nation,” one Atlanta newspaper wrote shortly after the event, “if the Follies ladies decided to wear cast-iron bustles, the vogue would become nationwide,” revealing the enormous influence they had on many American women who were also being exposed and targeted by Lucky Strike advertising.¹¹² By using public relations and advertising in harmony, Lucky Strike cigarettes were transformed into symbols of fashion, a healthy and moderate lifestyle, and popular culture endorsed by the Ziegfeld Follies.

Invigorated by the success of the Ziegfeld Follies moderation event, Hill and Bernays engineered an even larger publicity event to popularize smoking among women and reinforce current Lucky Strike advertising. Though smoking for women had been building momentum after the moderation campaign and previous advertising campaigns by Lucky Strike and other cigarette brands, it was still not

¹¹¹ Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising, "We Know Our Luckies,' 1929'."

¹¹² Smith, H. Allen, "Curves, Charm, and Contour Club to Combat Long Skirt Craze: Ziegfeld Girls Say Shorts Combine Comfort, Beauty." *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 23, 1929, 4.

socially acceptable for women to smoke in public. Any progress that Hill had made before 1929 had been to make cigarettes a domestic product for women, to be used in the home away from the private sphere.¹¹³ In order to make Lucky Strike cigarettes a product that women would be comfortable using in public, Hill and Bernays consulted a leading psychoanalyst to determine what would break the taboo. According to A.A. Brill, women subconsciously viewed the cigarette as a masculine product and a source of social freedom. “It is perfectly normal for women to want to smoke cigarettes...today the emancipation of women has suppressed many of their feminine desires,” he explained to Bernays.¹¹⁴ The Women’s Rights Movement had penetrated American society on all sorts of political, cultural, and social levels by the end of the 1920s, and Hill and Bernays decided that this trend could be leveraged to sell cigarettes.

Lucky Strike ads had used Amelia Earhart and other progressive women as celebrity endorsements since 1927, but never attempted to change the symbolic or social attributes of the cigarette. After Brill’s suggestion that women subconsciously viewed the cigarette as a source of freedom and symbol of equality with men, Bernays and Hill decided to publicize cigarettes as “torches of freedom.” Using this term helped bring women and the cigarette into the public sphere together. Unlike leisure, fashion, and public health-concepts that could all be thought of as exclusively

¹¹³ Bernays, *Biography of an Idea*, 386.

¹¹⁴ Brill was an early disciple of Sigmund Freud’s and determined that the cigarette was a phallic symbol of male authority. Being a nephew of Freud’s and a dedicated student of his uncle’s work on psychoanalysis too, Bernays was happy to apply this theory to Lucky Strike public relations. Brill was also consulted for advice on the design and layout of several Lucky Strike billboards and other printed advertisements, creating another intertextual link between ATC public relations and published advertising. “The use of psychoanalysis as the basis of advertising is common today,” Bernays wrote in 1965, “but I believe that this may have been the first instance of its application to advertising.” Bernays, *Biography of an Idea*, 395.

private or personal- characterizing cigarettes as “torches of freedom” made women’s smoking a public issue that took place on the street and in other open places.

Following the example set by the Ziegfeld Moderation campaign, Bernays and Hill again began to design a noteworthy public act that could get picked up by national media and distributed to consumers across the United States. The annual Easter Parade in New York City was a popular event that many Americans used to see the latest styles and trends in society, and it was here that debutantes and models hired by Bernays would attack traditional gender norms and support Women’s Rights, by publically smoking Lucky Strike cigarettes.

As the plan unfolded, debutantes and other fashionable young women living in New York City were contacted by Ruth Hale, a popular journalist, public figure, and advocate for improved social and political rights for women.¹¹⁵ According to Bernays, Hale “was glad to find a platform for her views, which happened to coincide with [the ATC’s],” and asked the debutantes to “fight another sex taboo...light another torch of freedom by smoking cigarettes while strolling on Fifth Avenue Easter Sunday.”¹¹⁶ Though the words seemed like the feminist rhetoric Hale was known for, they were carefully written by Bernays and signed and distributed under her name. The women that Hale enlisted were also specifically chosen by Bernays and Hill in order to have a maximum impact on publicity. An American Tobacco memorandum outlining the 1929 Easter Parade insisted that “discretion should be used in their selection...actresses should definitely be out...while they should be

¹¹⁵ Cott, 75.

¹¹⁶ Bernays, 387; For the original statement drafted by Bernays, see “Ruth Hale Statement Draft,” Bernays Papers, Series I, Box 86, Folder 5.

good looking, they should not look too “model-y.”¹¹⁷ Though Hill had used celebrities in the past to advertise Lucky Strike, using more ordinary looking women to publicize cigarettes in the Easter Parade helped bring smoking into the public sphere. It was more effective to use women who looked like they had come from the home and out into public to smoke, as one historian described to combine “the symbol of the emancipated flapper with that of the committed suffragist.”¹¹⁸

In no small part due to Bernays’ efforts outside of the public eye, the media quickly took up the story of smoking feminists in the Easter Parade and swiftly spread it across the United States.¹¹⁹ Though the story usually had to share space with other parade highlights, newspapers as prestigious and well-circulated as the New York Times featured the Torches of Freedom in their headlines and reported it favorably.¹²⁰ Old debates on women smoking quickly resurfaced after accounts of smoking suffragettes were published, which helped American Tobacco keep the same ideas on the public’s mind for an even longer amount of time. Bernays had hoped that there would be critics of the Torches of Freedom, and that a national debate over smoking would benefit Lucky Strike sales as it had in the anti-fat campaigns of the previous year. “Undoubtedly after the stories and pictures have appeared, there will be protests from non-smokers and believers in ‘Heaven, home and mother,” Bernays wrote in a

¹¹⁷“System Outline for Easter Smokers,” Bernays Papers, Series I, Box 84, Folder 3.

¹¹⁸Brandt, 85.

¹¹⁹ Not willing to leave any part of the Easter Parade to chance, Bernays insisted that “we should have a photographer to take pictures for use later...to guard against the possibility that the news photographers do not get good pictures for this purpose.” “System Outline for Easter Smokers,” Bernays Papers.

¹²⁰ “Easter Sun Finds the Past in Shadow at Modern Parade: Group of Girls Puff at Cigarettes as Gesture of “Freedom” - Resorts Well Filled.” *The New York Times*, April 1, 1929, 1.

memo to Hill shortly before the Easter Parade, “these should be watched for and answered in the same papers.”¹²¹ Though the Torches of Freedom March was not the deciding factor for many, it was a catalyst for getting women to begin smoking and to smoke outdoors without fear of criticism.

For the rest of 1929, Lucky Strike advertisements featured themes and symbols that were clearly in tune with the Torches of Freedom March. The image of the modern, liberated and socially equal American woman was the focus a new ad series that read “An Ancient Prejudice has been Revealed.” Featuring images of chains labeled as oppression being broken by the modern American woman, Lucky Strike ads used rhetoric that sounded the same as Ruth Hale’s words when she called on American women to publically smoke and support Women’s Rights.¹²²

The publicity and media attention that the Torches of Freedom generated in the United States was neatly tied to Lucky Strike advertising and made new ads much stronger than they would have been by themselves. Since Hill and Bernays engineered the entire Torches of Freedom march, they were able to create a very specific image of the ideal woman who was fashionable and socially conscious. After mass publicity exposed millions of American women to this image and pressured them to imitate it, ads that offered to make this image available to anyone who purchased Lucky Strike stood to benefit enormously.

¹²¹ “System Outline for Easter Smokers,” Bernays Papers.

¹²² One ad in the series claimed that “legally, politically, and socially woman has been emancipated from those chains which bound her. American Intelligence has exploded the ridiculous theory that forced the stigma of inferiority upon a sex,” and that just old views on women were outdated and incorrect, “ancient prejudice” against Lucky Strike cigarettes was also unjustified and did not belong in modern society. Lucky Strike, “An Ancient Prejudice Has Been Revealed,” October 9, 1929, *Pittsburgh Press*, 60.

Bernays' relationship with George Hill and American Tobacco did not last. But before the public relations expert left American Tobacco in 1936, he drafted a memorandum that outlined a central piece of the company's alternative advertising strategies. "As in other customs and fashions, the screen reflects the actual condition of our daily life...there is many a psychological need for a cigarette in the movies," he wrote, explaining: "the bashful hero lights a cigarette, the better to gain a hold on himself in his trying interview with his future father-in-law. The villain smokes hasty puffs, to hide his nervousness or to ease his bad conscience" If used correctly, the cigarette could be used as a film prop that could enhance the meaning of scenes and promote smoking in audiences. "Everything," Bernays concluded, "from the gayest comedy, to the most sinister tragedy can be expressed by a cigarette, in the hands or mouth of the skillful actor."¹²³ Embedding advertising and promoting cigarette through film was not a new concept in the early 1930s, but product placement offered another way to expand Lucky Strike advertising and connect it with other influential mediums in popular American culture.

The movie theater was a popular place for early twentieth century Americans from all walks of life, and its influence on their lives was enormous. Observations of the film industry often noted that films were powerful socializing forces, teaching viewers how to act and live in modern American society. "No fashion magazine, however skillfully edited, can compete with [Hollywood] when it comes to making it seem imperative to own a particular hat or necklace," wrote one observer in 1939. "Neither adjectives nor photographs nor drawings," she continued, "can make a woman feel about an evening wrap as she feels when she sees it on the shoulders of

¹²³ "The Cigarette in Film," Bernays Papers, Series I, Box 86, Folder 2

Irene Dunne or in the arms of William Powell.”¹²⁴ This same force could be used to sell cigarettes as well.

The relationship between Hollywood and Madison Avenue was well established in the 1930s. Movie theaters were places where large groups regularly congregated and were a captive audience until the end of the film, and advertisers quickly realized the potential this medium had for promoting various products and brands.¹²⁵ By the late 1920s, theaters were places of entertainment and open advertising. Though advertisers did pay for their brands to be featured within films, they often preferred to have theaters play short one reel ads before and after movies or to have advertising operations in cinema lobbies. By 1931, it was reported that more than half of all American cinemas showed advertising programs either before or during films.¹²⁶ However, there was significant backlash against direct advertising movie theaters from movie goers and film producers, much like similar criticisms against the excesses of advertising in radio and in print. “They [the public] pay at the box office for entertainment,” protested the founder of Universal Studios, “believe me, if you jam advertising down their throats and pack their eyes and ears with it you will build up resentment that will in time damn your business.”¹²⁷ Using film to advertise Lucky Strike held the potential to vastly improve the image of the cigarette

¹²⁴ Margaret F. Thorp, *America at the Movies*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), 108.

¹²⁵ Jean-Marc Lehu, *Branded Entertainment: Product Placement & Brand Strategy in the Entertainment Business*, (Philadelphia: Kogan Page, 2007), 18.

¹²⁶ “Ads on 50% of US Screens”, *Variety*, May 13, 1931. For more on the history of product placement in film, see Kerry Segrave, *Product Placement in Hollywood Films: A History*. (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2004.)

¹²⁷ “Double Barrage for Advertising on Screen for Dalies and Laemmle,” *Variety*, March 9, 1931. For more discussion on hostility to advertising in the 1930s, see Inger L. Stole, *Advertising on Trial: Consumer Activism and Corporate Public Relations in the 1930s*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006.)

and boost sales, but it would need to be done in a way that did not risk antagonizing viewers by appearing too commercial. Just as they had incorporated the news into their intertextual advertising system, Hill and his advertisers would manipulate films so they could be associated with Lucky Strikes.

Though American Tobacco did advertise Lucky Strike directly in theaters via “playlets” and other short commercials shown alongside feature films, the vast majority of their use of the film industry came in the form of product placement and paid testimonials from film stars.¹²⁸ Early in his presidential career, George Hill had come to see the popularity and influence that celebrities had in American society, and that this influence could be manipulated to sell cigarettes. By associating the brand with entertainers, politicians, doctors, and other prominent figures, Lucky Strike was imbued with the social authority these figures held and legitimized the consumption of the product in a social setting. Testimonials had proven controversial for the ATC as a result of over-saturation and the revelation that celebrities did not use the products they endorsed; they were recognized as an important factor in the rapid success that Lucky Strike saw in the late 1920s.

Scores of actors, directors, playwrights, and other famous celebrities were hired by American Tobacco throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and endorsed Lucky Strike cigarettes in print and radio advertisements. Between 1937 and 1938 alone the company had well over 130 prominent radio, theater, and film personalities on their

¹²⁸ According to one 1937 advertising agreement between American Tobacco and General Screen Advertising Inc., a national network of theater advertising, Lucky Strike was advertised in theaters that sold at least 2,000 tickets weekly with short commercials running around five to seven minutes in length. “Motion Picture Advertising Agreement,” July 16, 1937, American Tobacco Collection, Legacy Tobacco Documents Library, University of California, San Francisco.

pay-roll.¹²⁹ Just like American Tobacco preferred using theaters with reliably large audiences, they also actively sought out the most popular actors in the film industry to endorse Lucky Strikes. “In other words,” one American Tobacco executive said, “we don’t want to put a plug [use a celebrity endorsement] in about a class “B” picture no one is ever going to see.”¹³⁰ American Tobacco’s testimonial campaigns were aimed at appealing to the largest group of viewers possible, so any actor or actress with a connection to the most popular films of the day was likely to appear in a Lucky Strike ad.¹³¹

American Tobacco was not simply concerned with the quality and popularity of the stars they were hiring, however. Indeed, the quantity of actors, actresses, and other prominent figures from the film industry was also a top concern. American Tobacco dominated the tobacco industry in celebrity endorsements from the film industry from the late 1920s through the 1940s. While rivals brands like Camel often bought testimonials from athletes and other popular figures, no other brand came close to Lucky Strike in terms of total endorsements from movie actors or directors.¹³² These testimonials, written by copywriters at American Tobacco and Lord & Thomas, were couched in language that suggested Hollywood exclusively

¹²⁹ “Testimonial Artist Contract List by Clark Miller,” November 21, 1938. American Tobacco Collection, Legacy Tobacco Documents Library, University of California, San Francisco.

¹³⁰ “Meeting Lucky Strike Group,” January 14, 1937. American Tobacco Collection.

¹³¹ Hollywood studios also used Lucky Strike testimonials to promote their upcoming films. An endorsement from a particular actor was usually purposely scheduled to release at the same time as their latest film, and studios contracted their stars to American Tobacco on the condition that all testimonials would be approved by the studio first and that film titles would be mentioned almost as prominently as the star’s name in each ad. K. L. Lum, J. R. Polansky, R. K. Jackler, and S. A. Glantz, “Signed, Sealed and Delivered: “Big Tobacco” in Hollywood, 1927-1951.” *Tobacco Control* 17, no. 5 (October 2008): 318.

¹³² Lum, Polansky, Jackler, and Glantz. “Signed, Sealed and Delivered,” 314.

smoked Lucky Strikes.¹³³ A 1937 print testimonial made the claim that “of the many trends that sweep through Hollywood, one of the longest lasting has been the preference for Luckies. I once asked a ‘property’ man—who supplies cigarettes to the actors—what his favorite is. He answered by opening up a box containing cigarettes. They were all Luckies.”¹³⁴ Similar testimonials spoke of actors always being able to borrow a Lucky Strike from literally any actor they met in Hollywood, as it was everyone’s favorite brand. American Tobacco published dozens of ads with this same message throughout this period, creating the impression that behind the silver screen was a cloud of Lucky Strike smoke, and that no other brands had a place in the film industry. “It certainly is the cigarette of the acting profession,” one testimonial attributed to James Gleason read, bluntly summarizing American Tobacco’s image of Hollywood.¹³⁵

Year after year, American Tobacco continued publishing ads that linked Lucky Strikes with every part of the film industry. The campaign peaked between 1937 and 1938, when over sixty new endorsements from movie stars and other Hollywood figures were signed to American Tobacco and released through print and radio.¹³⁶ The short testimonial contracts that were signed by celebrities were clearly worded in a way that supported the ATC’s campaign to associate Hollywood with

¹³³ Though celebrities (or their agents) did sign off on the wording of testimonials before they were published, they did not actually provide any of the ad’s content. Endorsers were typically given a short interview which asked them if they smoked or not, what brand they preferred, and if they would agree to smoke Lucky Strikes in the future so that there would be some truth to the testimonial. Blank Contract Agreement, 1937, American Tobacco Collection.

¹³⁴ Miriam Hopkins Testimonial and Contract, 22-23, “Lucky Strike Testimonial Campaign, Book #2,” December 9, 1937, American Tobacco Collection.

¹³⁵ “Lucky Strikes Never Affect the Voice of James Gleason,” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Fed. 22, 1928, p 4.

¹³⁶ Lum, Polansky, Jackler, and Glantz. "Signed, Sealed and Delivered," 314.

Lucky Strike long after their particular advertisement was published. Signers were given a year's supply of Lucky Strike cigarettes, one carton per week, so that they could be seen smoking the brand at press interviews or other public events. American Tobacco also had the right to have these celebrities appear on radio shows that they broadcast. Music and variety shows like *Your Hit Parade*, *Your Hollywood Parade*, and *The Jack Benny Show* were sponsored by Lucky Strike and were also effective spots for promotion. In order to tie print and radio ads to these on-air celebrity interviews, contracts stated that Lucky Strike radio shows were "to include the broadcasting of [a celebrity's testimonial] statement in whole or in part, which such variations as do not change the substance of such statement." Further, celebrities agreed to not allow their name or image to be used in the advertisement of any other cigarette or tobacco product or to make any public appearances for any other company connected to the tobacco industry.¹³⁷ Just like he had aggressively bought up all public relations talent in the industry, George Hill paid handsomely for a virtual monopoly in movie star power.

As testimonials from the Hollywood elite were becoming a significant component of Lucky Strike advertising, the cigarette became an important prop in the movies. Realizing early on that the movies themselves could be the most effective site of cigarette advertising, the ATC encouraged and pressured the film industry to include cigarettes in positive and central roles in all films.¹³⁸ In the outline that he had distributed to film directors and other influential figures who worked on studio lots,

¹³⁷Conrad Hagel Contract, "Statement and Release, Agreement," January 25, 1937, American Tobacco Collection.

¹³⁸Schudson, 101.

Edward Bernays had explained that “a great deal can be said with a cigarette which would ordinarily require a great many words to express.”¹³⁹ While he was still employed by American Tobacco, Bernays distributed documents to directors and other important figures on film lots which helped establish cigarettes as useful props in the movies. In order to effectively use movies as advertisements for Lucky Strikes, cigarettes needed to become central objects on the screen, driving plots and defining characters.

After the major studios began rigidly self-censoring films in 1934, the cigarette offered a milder metaphor for sex when more overt displays were banned by the Hays Code. Perhaps one of the most famous examples of smoking in this era was the 1942 drama *Now, Voyager*. After one legendary scene in which Paul Henreid romantically lights two cigarettes in his mouth and gives one to romantic interest Bette Davis, the sexual intimacy between the two stars was abundantly clear. *Now, Voyager* was but one film of many that portrayed cigarettes in a positive and glamorous fashion, and would be imitated by many adoring fans. According to one film historian, Henreid’s cigarette trick “became the preferred romantic gesture of thousands of high school students that year.”¹⁴⁰ Not coincidentally, Davis had been endorsing Lucky Strikes since 1937. Other Lucky Strike ads published around the same time depicted lovers sharing cigarettes in a similar fashion as *Now, Voyager* as well.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ “The Cigarette in Film,” Bernays Papers.

¹⁴⁰ Aljean Harmetz, “History is Written in Smoke.” *The New York Times*, November 8, 1992.

¹⁴¹ Bette Davis Testimonial and Contract, 1937, American Tobacco Collection; National Cancer Institute, “The Role of the Media in Promoting and Reducing Tobacco Use,” 2008, 363.

Romance and glamour were not the only emotions to be demonstrated by cigarettes in the movies. American Tobacco saw to it that leading actors and actresses smoked cigarettes to portray a variety of positive and desirable traits that Americans were exposed to most movies they saw.¹⁴² Due in part to criticism against product placement within the film industry and from the general public, cigarettes seen in the movies were almost always shown without any distinguishable brand marks. The company believed that avoiding brand names and blatant references to Lucky Strike helped keep audiences happier in the movie theater and unaware that they were being exposed to advertising. It was the numerous testimonials and endorsements of Lucky Strikes that actors and actresses gave and the advertisements that were designed to imitate Hollywood glitz and glamour that put Lucky Strike on the silver screen. According to a 2008 study of Hollywood cigarette endorsements, Lucky Strike “dominated the early period of cross-promotional cigarette advertising,” and hired dozens more film celebrities than the rest of the industry combined.¹⁴³ After advertising and publicity campaigns created the impression that everyone smoked

¹⁴² Though there is little documentary evidence confirming American Tobacco’s direct involvement in the cigarette’s use in films, many observers and historians have noticed the rise of smoking in film after the 1927 release of *The Jazz Singer*. The introduction of the “talkies” corresponded with American Tobacco’s “Precious Voice” campaign of that same year and was also when the company began buying testimonials from Hollywood in large numbers. Since American Tobacco bankrolled the film budgets of many popular “A” list films and featured many more films prominently in their print advertisements and radio shows, had a close working relationship with executives in the major Hollywood studios, appropriated large sums of money and cigarettes to hundreds of actors and other significant figures in Hollywood, and had agents like Edward Bernays lobbying directors and producers to use cigarettes in film, Hollywood studios felt heavy pressure to portray cigarettes and smoking in a positive way in films that they would not have done to such a degree without the influence of the ATC. Brandt, 86-87. Segrave, 17. Shudson, 101. Lum, Polansky, Jackler, and Glantz, “Signed, Sealed and Delivered,” 321.

¹⁴³ In 1937 alone, the ATC signed over sixty multi-year endorsement contracts from stars such as Claudette Colbert, Gary Cooper, Joan Crawford, Henry Fonda, Clark Gable, Bob Hope, Carol Lombard, Fred McMurry, Conrad Nagel, Edward G. Robinson, Barbra Stanwyck, and Spender Tracy. These actors and actresses came from seven different major studios, ensuring that Lucky Strike was seen all over Hollywood. Lum, Polansky, Jackler, and Glantz. “Signed, Sealed and Delivered,” 314, 319.

Lucky Strikes in Hollywood, a moviegoer could assume that the only brands being used in the movie was Lucky Strike as well.

With the support of mass Lucky Strike advertising behind it and the connections between the brand and Hollywood glaringly clear, George Hill was able to turn the movies into one of his more effective advertisements. Without his policy of intertextualizing advertising mediums and campaigns, it would have been impossible to make Hollywood another source for teaching Americans how to use cigarettes and to normalize them in popular culture.¹⁴⁴ Intertextual advertising worked both ways. Advertisements that synced with the popular films of the day became much more effective than they would have been on their own. Having the popularity of Hollywood backing Lucky Strike advertisements helped them attract attention and fit the brand into society. Intertextuality also hid the blatant commercialism and direct influence of American Tobacco from film audiences. Consumers were more likely to purchase cigarettes- or any other product for that matter- if they believed that they were buying it of their own free will and were not being coerced by an advertising message. By using the movies to promote smoking and endow the Lucky Strike brand with positive qualities and emotions, consumers could feel like they still maintained their agency and were not being coerced into buying cigarettes.¹⁴⁵

In recent decades, historians have identified the Lucky Strike public relations and product placement campaigns as noteworthy components of American Tobacco's

¹⁴⁴ According to Alan Brandt, film helped show how central the cigarette was "in the social idioms of everyday life. Films both reflected and reified cultural norms at the same time they created styles and fads. Brandt, 87.

¹⁴⁵ Bernays called this illusion or manipulation of consumer agency the "engineering of consent." Though he was not responsible for American Tobacco's film advertising strategies, his earlier work on the Torches of Freedom March and in popularizing slender figures undoubtedly influenced the direction that the company took in its relationship with Hollywood.

advertising strategy and have directly correlated them with the sharp rise in sales that occurred in the late 1920 and continued after George Hill's death in 1946. Lucky Strike's high sales at a significantly lower advertising cost per cigarette (compared to comparable brands) was in large part due to the successful connections of print, radio, news, and film in the public mind. In order to fully understand American Tobacco's advertising strategies and how the company thought of the Lucky Strike brand, it is also important to investigate the American Tobacco Building in the New York World's Fair. On display in 1939 and 1940, the building celebrated Lucky Strike manufacturing and welcomed thousands of visitors through its doors.

The New York World's Fair was held from April 1939 to October 1940, during which an estimated 39 million entrance tickets were sold.¹⁴⁶ There were hundreds of exhibits that covered the Fair's enormous grounds, offering visitors everything from amusement park rides to displays of heavy industry and cultural exhibits from nations around the world. Despite their wide range of subjects and exhibit materials, there were two distinct Fair themes that tied exhibits together. First, the Fair was styled as "The World of Tomorrow." Envisioning a future where the wonders of machines and advanced technology improved the quality of life for all. The Official Guidebook to the Fair described this utopian vision, writing "the eyes of the Fair are on the future...in the sense of presenting a new and clearer view of today in preparation for tomorrow."¹⁴⁷ The second theme, "democracy," was closely tied into the Fair's vision of the future. The Fair's Committee on Theme announced that

¹⁴⁶ According to Warren Susman, the typical visitor visited the Fair 2.3 times on average, so it is safe to assume that somewhere between 15 and 20 million people actually visited. Susman, 217.

¹⁴⁷ New York World's Fair 1939 Incorporated, *Official Guide Book of the New York World's Fair 1939*. (New York: Exposition Publications, 1939), 41.

the Fair “is planned to be ‘everyman’s fair—to show the way toward the improvement of all the factors contributing to human welfare.’”¹⁴⁸ The image of a positive future where the masses would have the freedom to consume was carried throughout the Fair, and was the same idea that American Tobacco executives would try to associate with the Lucky Strike exhibit.

The American Tobacco Building was located in the “Food Section,” in a central location about 600 feet east of the Fair’s famous Trylon and Perisphere structures. Being located in such proximity to the centerpieces of the Fair meant that the American Tobacco Building was in a highly trafficked area of the fair where many visitors would pass by on their way to the rest of the fairgrounds. To attract attention, the exterior of the building was painted white and modeled after a Lucky Strike cigarette package, complete with the iconic red and green target logo on the front. The building’s sleek and modern design helped it visually associate with the themes and general atmosphere of the Fair with Lucky Strike. Though the building was officially called the American Tobacco Building, it was dedicated exclusively to the Lucky Strike brand. The exhibit was designed just to celebrate Luckies, a fact made even clearer to visitors once they came inside.

As a visitor made their way inside, the first thing they could see was the large cigarette-making, packing, and sealing machines. Located in the front of the building, large plate glass windows made these machines and their operators visible to outside passersby and set them apart from the rest of the exhibit.¹⁴⁹ These were specially

¹⁴⁸ *Official Guide Book of the New York World's Fair*, 41.

¹⁴⁹“Index to Lucky Strike World’s Fair Exhibit, Policy and Duties,” April 1939, Tobacco Documents Online, 3. Tobacco Documents Online is a digital repository for papers from the tobacco

designed to allow viewers to see inside each machine and observe the actual processes that manufactured each cigarette. At the helm of every machine was a smiling white worker, another attempt by the ATC to exclude people of color from the world of Lucky Strike cigarettes. In reality, there were many black workers in the tobacco fields and in ATC factories, yet the exhibit's windows distorted the racial reality of cigarette manufacturing to anyone who passed by.¹⁵⁰

Next to the cigarette machines was a large "U" shaped exhibition space where visitors could easily see the entire room and its many displays all at once. The back wall opposite the front machinery was divided into sections that had dioramas of tobacco cultivation and auctioning, maps of the United States and other regions where different types of tobacco are grown, and a large collage of photographs showing the ATC research lab and quality control efforts. In the center of this back wall was a movie screen that regularly played a short film about cigarette production in the company's Richmond factory. Using striking colors and visual cues from the film, the ATC sought to demonstrate the diversity in tobacco types that went into their cigarettes, and the scientifically advanced processes that blended these materials together in every Lucky Strike.¹⁵¹

industry that are scattered across the internet in corporate and archival repositories. Documents cited from this source are usually also available online at the Legacy Tobacco Documents Library.

¹⁵⁰ Promotional literature about Lucky Strike manufacturing that was available at the exhibit also did not contain any images of non-white workers in the agricultural, industrial, or research sectors of the tobacco industry. This was far from the actual ATC labor force that made Lucky Strikes that was diverse and experiences workplace racial discrimination and labor disputes. See Roy G. Flannagan, *The Story of Lucky Strike*. (The American Tobacco Company, 1939). and "American Tobacco Company Boycott Leaflet," circa 1943-1946, Series I, box 6, Folder 12, Tobacco Workers International Union Archives, State of Maryland and Historical Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.

¹⁵¹ Maps of tobacco growing regions were color-coded according to the approximate color of the leaves found in each area. "Francisco & Jacobus, Engineers & Architects to H.R. Hammer", May 11, 1939, Tobacco Documents Online.

Though the American Tobacco Building was focused on Lucky Strike manufacturing, it also sold cigarettes to any visitors who were interested. A counter located next to the manufacturing display space sold customers souvenir packs of cigarettes that could be mailed from the building to anywhere in the United States. These cartons were specially designed for the Fair and featured silhouettes of the famous Trylon and Perisphere on the side, yet again visually linking the Fair and its themes to the Lucky Strike brand. Along with Lucky Strike cigarettes, the sales counter also distributed copies of *The Story of Lucky Strike*, a history of the ATC and account of the Lucky Strike manufacturing process that mirrored the information displayed in the exhibit.¹⁵² Both the World's Fair edition Lucky Strikes and book were popular with visitors, and were common souvenirs brought home from the Fair.¹⁵³

Despite the pretense of being an educational exhibit or artistic expression of modern manufacturing, the American Tobacco Building was designed from the start to be an advertisement for Lucky Strikes. "The exhibit is really another medium of advertising Lucky Strike cigarettes," company executives insisted in the exhibit plan. The American Tobacco Building was also labeled as "Salesmanship in Person," and company vice-president Paul Hahn hoped that the visual display of Lucky Strike would influence potential customers in the same ways that a salesman would in a

¹⁵² Though the book was presented as a scientific and informative look at the tobacco industry, it was a blatant piece of propaganda for American Tobacco, calling Lucky Strike cigarettes "an amazing blend of industry and romance, of the tradition of tobacco and the precision of modern science...a magic product." Flannagan, 92.

¹⁵³ Larry Zim, Mel Lerner, and Herbert Rolfes, *The World of Tomorrow: The 1939 New York World's Fair*. (New York: Main Street Press, 1988), 211.

store or on the street.¹⁵⁴ Each part of the building's design and displays were consciously associated with the themes of the Fair in order to connect advertising at the Fair with print and radio ad campaigns published at the same time. This way, the American Tobacco Building and the World's Fair were intertextualized and made a part of Lucky Strike advertising.

The Fair's "World of Tomorrow" and democracy themes aimed to create show visitors an egalitarian vision of the future where American democracy was grounded in consumer capitalism.¹⁵⁵ This fit closely with existing Lucky Strike advertising campaigns that thought of the consuming public as a single mass audience. In its official guide book, Fair President Grover Whalen welcomed visitors writing "this is *your* Fair, built for *you* and dedicated to *you*."¹⁵⁶ In homes across the United States, radio listeners had been hearing identical messages of mass democratic participation in consumerism for years on *Your Hit Parade*, the music show sponsored by Lucky Strike.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, the emphasis on the word "your" in the guide book was similar to the emphasis in the name *Your Hit Parade*, and demonstrate how both were intended to make visitors/listeners feel like they were personally involved in the process of consumption.

Giving visitors a feeling of agency and control was an important part of the American Tobacco Building, which was designed to literally put people in the middle

¹⁵⁴ Index to Lucky Strike World's Fair Exhibit, Tobacco Documents Online, 7, 1.

¹⁵⁵ A. Joan Saab, *For the Millions: American Art and Culture Between the Wars*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 135.

¹⁵⁶ *Official Guide to the New York World's Fair*, 5.

¹⁵⁷ Populist language was extremely common on *Your Hit Parade*, where announcers claimed that songs played on the show were determined by the American people (as determined by sheet music sales and dance hall requests). *Radio Continuity, Your Hit Parade*, January 4, 1936, Broadcast Script. Tobacco Documents Online, 1.

of the Lucky Strike manufacturing process. By having the only open space in the building surrounded by maps of tobacco growing regions, machinery, and pictures of research labs, the emphasis in this exhibit was on demystifying the process of creation in Lucky Strike cigarettes. In this respect, the building fit closely with the rest of the Fair, where exhibitors realized that a fair dedicated to a consumer-driven society needed to focus more on the process than on the end product or the machines that made them. Making a visitor a part of the process was an important part of democratic capitalism.¹⁵⁸ The large open space that contained all building visitors was significant in one other way: it was designed to show visitors that they were part of a large crowd. Since the late 1920s, advertisements had often made reference to the millions of Americans who bought and enjoyed smoking Lucky Strikes. *Your Hit Parade* and other sponsored radio shows repeatedly mentioned the large listening audience which was a part of the song selection process. At the Fair, exhibits used the crowd “both as actor and as decoration of great power... [Fair] designers found out that the crowd’s greatest pleasure is in the crowd.”¹⁵⁹

American Tobacco advertising executives wanted to create an exhibit where “there will be demonstrated the various advertising stories that have heretofore been told in...commercials.”¹⁶⁰ Inside the American Tobacco Building, displays showed visitors the “toasting” process that was a prominent part of Lucky Strike ads since 1917.¹⁶¹ The short film shown in the exhibit also featured the ultraviolet rays that

¹⁵⁸ Susman, 218.

¹⁵⁹ *Architectural Record*, 1940, quoted in Susman, 218.

¹⁶⁰ Index to Lucky Strike World’s Fair Exhibit, Tobacco Documents Online, 20.

were used in the toasting process, a fact which had also been included in Lucky Strike ads since 1931. By including “toasting” and ultraviolet rays in the exhibit, advertising claims that had existed for years only in print and as invisible radio messages suddenly became tangible and real. Visitors could see the manufacturing processes that turned raw tobacco into the recognizable Lucky Strike cigarette. Without years of previous advertising, the display of tobacco toasting would have been much less familiar to viewers. At the same time, allowing millions of visitors to view the toasting process first-hand reinforced other mediums of advertising that mentioned the process.

American Tobacco was the only cigarette manufacturer to have an exhibit at the World’s Fair, and their participation is useful in understanding how the company thought of itself in the late 1930s. The World’s Fair was an important cultural event in American society, and it is clear that the company felt it was important to have Lucky Strike included in it. Regardless of how many visitors actually walked into the exhibit and were actually convinced to buy Lucky Strikes afterwards, the ATC’s primary goal was to have Lucky Strike be included in the Fair’s fantastic vision of the future.¹⁶² The resources the company put into constructing and maintaining the exhibit for two years reveal the sense of self-importance that the American Tobacco

¹⁶¹ “It’s Toasted” was the original slogan used for Lucky Strikes, and was even printed on cigarette packs and cartons. It was the exclusive slogan used by the brand the mid 1930s, and was not entirely eliminated until the early 1940s, when it was replaced by “Lucky Strike Means Fine Tobacco.” The phrase was used to back up American Tobacco’s claim that the tobacco used in Lucky Strikes was put through a superior toasting process which made its quality and taste better than rival brands.

¹⁶² Although there were no official attendance reports, one estimate put the American Tobacco Building at 3 million total visitors. Attendance Requests, Katherine B. Gray to John C. Rink, 1940, New York World’s Fair 1939 and 1940 Incorporated Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

Company had at the time, and that this was an acceptable idea to incorporate into Lucky Strike advertising.¹⁶³

In the decades since American Tobacco intertextualized public relations campaigns, Hollywood films, and the New York World's Fair with print and radio advertising, the rest of the advertising industry has come to embrace integrated marketing as an essential part of American business. Since the late 1980s advertisers have repackaged the concepts and systems that worked for Lucky Strike under the "Integrated Marketing Approach" label and have been reaching American consumers from across multiple communication mediums with unified sales messages. But the efforts of American Tobacco during the George Hill years show that this approach to advertising worked much earlier in the 20th century as well. Successful intertextual advertising utilized advertising campaigns that were designed to mesh rhetorically and thematically with each other. These connections helped shape the meanings that consumers found in each separate advertisement and created a stronger advertising campaign that was stronger than any of its individual parts. By integrating advertising mediums together, the ATC further demonstrated their belief in a mass consumer audience that should be targeted with a single unifying theme. Intertextual advertising was also at its most effective when it targeted Americans on an emotional or social level. Charging Lucky Strikes with positive qualities associated with accepted social movements and influential figures in popular culture and American society at large helped break old taboos associated with smoking and made the brand stand out from its rivals.

¹⁶³ Before the exhibit was even opened to the public, the ATC had spent well over \$200,000 on the building and its displays. Lucky Strike World's Fair Index, Tobacco Documents Online, 40.

The intertextuality of Lucky Strike advertising demonstrates the American Tobacco Company's belief that a mass audience was best persuaded by a single message that was repeated and reinforced through many different advertising mediums. Regardless of if a Lucky Strike ad took the form of a newspaper article, radio show, popular film, or World's Fair exhibit, viewers could count on seeing the same theme of modernity each time. The American Tobacco Company was not the first corporation to utilize public relations, or product placement, or to advertise in large events like the World's Fair. But George Hill made American Tobacco one of the first major American companies to use so many different forms of alternative advertising on a mass scale, and was a pioneer in the successful integration of these mediums in ways that resulted in noticeable increases in general cigarette use in the United States and in kept Lucky Strike at the top of the tobacco industry.

Chapter 3: Selling a Nation of the Air: Lucky Strike Radio Advertising and the Development of National Identity, 1928-1946

January 4th, 1936. It's Saturday night and around thirty or forty million Americans are tuning in to the National Broadcasting Corporation Red Network to hear the hottest songs on the air. Al Goodman is conducting the orchestra and the popular Broadway songwriter is sure to not disappoint with tonight's performance. But the songs listeners heard were not selected by Goodman, nor were they chosen by his orchestra or NBC or even the show's sponsor, Lucky Strike cigarettes. No, when *Your Hit Parade* came on each week, listeners could count on hearing songs they had actually chosen. "Once again, the voice of the people has spoken in selecting the tunes for *Your Hit Parade*," the announcer assured each eager listener, "New Yorkers and Californians, Northerners and Southerners, men, women and children—one hundred and twenty million of you have told us what you want to hear this Saturday night."¹⁶⁴ After this announcement, the Hit Paraders Orchestra immediately began to play "No Other One," a popular song that ranked eleventh that week. Fourteen more songs would be played before the hour was over, all of them determined from nationwide surveys of sheet music sales and dance hall requests. Like many other programs of the 1930s and 1940s, *Your Hit Parade* was expressly billed as a show for the entire nation. When listeners heard the show, they knew they were enjoying the same songs their distant neighbors in every corner of the country liked as well. "If you could make a non-stop flight starting in Pittsburgh and finishing in Los Angeles," the announcer reassured the audience after playing the week's number three song

¹⁶⁴ *Radio Continuity, Your Hit Parade*. Broadcast Script. Tobacco Documents Online. January 4, 1936, 1.

“Alone,” “you’d find that in both towns this melody is the third most popular number.” *Your Hit Parade*, as the announcer succinctly put it, was “all America’s program.”¹⁶⁵

However, *Your Hit Parade* listeners would not just be hearing the nation’s choice songs that Saturday night. Two songs later, as the orchestra neared the end of “Red Sails in the Sunset,” the music swelled and faded away and the announcer’s voice returned. But this time, instead of discussing the songs or what towns especially liked them, he had a different message. First, an anecdote about a train conductor pausing to smoke a cigarette after a successful journey. As he watches his passengers disembark safely he takes a long draw on his Lucky Strike in this pause before he departs to his next destination. Then came a short sketch describing a woman smoking from her balcony high above the New York City streets. Her throat is sensitive so she chooses Lucky Strike because it offers her the protection from tobacco’s irritants she needs and also provides a leisurely and enjoyable smoking experience. “Yes, Luckies please most smokers,” the announcer claimed, mirroring the language that he used to describe the nation’s choice in songs earlier, “they’re made of center leaf tobacco, the finest grown. And the private Lucky Strike process... ITS TOASTED, which removes certain harsh irritants naturally present in all tobaccos, is your protection against irritation, against cough.”¹⁶⁶ Just like the producers of *Your Hit Parade* applied their tabulation process to raw data and statistics to determine the nation’s favorite songs, the American Tobacco Company put its tobacco through advanced chemical and mechanical processes to create

¹⁶⁵ *Radio Continuity, Your Hit Parade*, 8.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, January 4, 1936, 2.

America's favorite cigarette. Announcements like this would pierce the air five more times before *Your Hit Parade* finished its repertoire of melodies, each with the same message promoting Lucky Strike as the nation's choice in cigarette. The announcer made this connection quite clear later in the broadcast, saying "when Mr. and Mrs. America start telling us what they want in a cigarette, we get a variety of answers... Well... add all these requirements together and here is the answer- Lucky Strike."¹⁶⁷

Your Hit Parade was one of the most popular radio programs of the 1930s and 1940s and is probably the best remembered show sponsored by Lucky Strike. But, it was not the only show to broadcast Lucky Strike advertising. The American Tobacco Company (ATC), manufacturers of Lucky Strike cigarettes, sponsored no less than twelve distinct radio programs between 1926 and 1946. In this time, company president George Washington Hill became an important pioneer and innovator in the field of radio advertising. Hill was one of the first corporate executives to use the medium as a serious platform for mass advertising during radio's infancy. No price was too large for Hill, who spared no expense hiring the finest radio talents and most popular stars of the air to produce and perform his programs. However, as the ATC increasingly poured resources into radio (upwards of \$2 million annually by 1931), the total advertising budget for the company actually dropped. By the end of the 1930s, American Tobacco was spending less than fifty percent on its annual advertising budget than it had been in the beginning of the decade.¹⁶⁸ At the same

¹⁶⁷ *Radio Continuity, Your Hit Parade*, 7.

¹⁶⁸ John McNeil, *American Tobacco Company Network Radio Advertising to April 1939*. N.B.C Statistical Department. 1939, 7. In the first half of the 1930s, American Tobacco spent an

time, sales of Lucky Strikes remained consistently high throughout George Hill's presidency.¹⁶⁹ Despite fierce competition from rival cigarette brands, the grim realities of the Great Depression, and a host of other obstacles it is clear that radio was keeping Lucky Strike on Americans' minds and in their hands.

The successful shows American Tobacco sponsored under Hill's direction always adhered to a number of underlying principles. Though some Lucky Strike shows fizzled and were quickly taken off the air, *Your Hit Parade*, *Kay Kyser's College of Musical Knowledge*, *The Jack Benny Program*, and several other shows all utilized the same core elements. First and foremost, programs sponsored by American Tobacco and Lucky Strike were *advertising*. Entertainment came second.¹⁷⁰ George Hill engineered shows that would generate the largest audiences possible and expose them to as much advertising as possible. Having enjoyable entertainment kept audiences tuned in, but this was only meant to generate sales, nothing more. In response to his many critics and listeners who complained about the incessant sales pitches and ear-shattering repetition of Lucky Strike slogans on the air, Hill replied "Certainly we're commercial, we can't afford to be anything else. I don't have the

annual average of 2.6 cents per 10,000 cigarettes sold. By the end of the decade, the company reduced this cost to a mere 1.4 cents per 10,000 sold, a 46% reduction in advertising expenditures. See Borden, 229.

¹⁶⁹ By 1943, American Tobacco was selling ten billion more cigarettes annually than its closest competitor, Camel, while spending about \$3 million less that year in advertising. "Luckies Sell Most With Smallest Ad Budget of 'Big 3'." *Advertising Age* 16, no. 29 (July 16, 1945): 1.

¹⁷⁰ The idea of subordinating entertainment to propagandistic messages was also popular in Hollywood in the 1930s, where films like *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939) used similar techniques to generate anti-Nazi sentiment in audiences.

right to spend the stockholder's money just to entertain the public."¹⁷¹ But the public was entertained, and continued tuning in- and buying Lucky Strikes- by the billion.

Along with camouflaging Lucky Strike advertising with radio entertainment (whether the listeners detected it or not), Hill's more successful shows all attempted to develop a national awareness in listeners. These were not programs for individual cities or regions. When listeners switched on their sets, they were transported to an aural world they knew was inhabited by the rest of the American public. And in this world, where performances from any corner of the country traveled instantly into living rooms in every town, Lucky Strike was the force that brought everything together. George Hill did not just co-opt existing strains of popular culture into his advertising. On the contrary, the shows that were sponsored by Lucky Strike created a listening audience that increasingly thought of itself as a national body. In each of these sponsored programs, popular culture and entertainment were presented to listeners in a conflation of advertising and national identity. The more these programs could appear to be *American* shows made for an *American* audience, the more these same American listeners would be inclined to buy Lucky Strike.

Using radio advertising to foster a stronger national identity was an explicit goal for George Hill and the other men at American Tobacco who created these shows. Hill was adamant about this national component, writing in 1943 that "we have been striving and are continuing to strive to increase our Crossley [ratings] and of course that means a bigger and broader [American] audience."¹⁷² Since Lucky

¹⁷¹ "Advertising: Hill Legends," *Newsweek*, September 23, 1946, 77.

¹⁷² Howard Connell, "We Must Use Our Power, A Memorandum to the American Tobacco Company," Legacy Tobacco Documents Library, 1943, 2.

Strike cigarettes were distributed nationally, potential customers who thought of themselves in national terms would be more likely to choose Lucky Strikes over local brands and other products that were not associated with America. Stronger national identity also meant Americans would be more receptive to advertising carried in national media, which was far more cost-efficient. Newspaper, billboards, and other localized advertising campaigns had to be adapted to local cultures and were not as effective outside of these smaller areas.¹⁷³ Advertising targeted to local, diverse groups of Americans, Hill believed, was like a shotgun blast. Spread out across a wide area, local advertising became atomized and its overall effectiveness diluted. “We have our target- the audience. Our problem is to hit that target clean, and with terrific impact,” an ATC memorandum said, “you can’t do it with ‘shotgun fire,’ for that sprinkles power...for our purposes, we must look to an even more powerful weapon...”¹⁷⁴ Hill advocated for concentrated national advertising campaigns that promoted and benefitted from a growing feeling of national identity among Americans. When customers felt in tune with mainstream national culture and the rest of the American people, it was easier for national advertising (carried in national media and enmeshed in mainstream popular culture) to resonate more broadly.

¹⁷³ Newspaper and billboards were local and expensive. They required the ATC to deal with local media vendors for space, requiring a much larger staff of employees who had to stay in constant contact between the ATC headquarters in New York City and locations all across the United States. Negotiating and working with NBC and other national radio networks was much more centralized and left less room for errors and wasted resources. Having a large network of localized advertising also made it difficult for the ATC to release new advertising campaigns uniformly across the United States, which it did on a regular basis. With centralized radio networks, a new campaign was instantly distributed to every receiving station without the worry of out-of-date advertising material being re-broadcast. See Kluger, 90.

¹⁷⁴ Connell, 2.

Emphasizing feelings of national identity was a clear goal for George Hill and the American Tobacco Company, and the success of the Lucky Strike brand relied on the strength of widespread national identity. Since radio could instantly reach large groups of people and merge advertising and entertainment together, it was an effective medium to advertise and promote the growth of national consciousness that was developing in this period. American Tobacco was not the only company to advertise through radio programs designed for a national audience, but it did produce some of the most blatantly commercialized entertainment on the air and thus provides a unique perspective on the forces that promoted national identity for profit.¹⁷⁵

How Americans developed a national identity is an important part of the history of the early 20th century. Historians often attribute the erosion of exclusively local and regional views and shifts to a more nationally focused American culture to political and social forces. The expansion of the federal government as part of the New Deal, the movement of peoples during the Great Depression, common experiences during the Second World War, and the rise of mass communication and entertainment are frequently cited as the major factors that pushed Americans to think of themselves in more national terms. But it is important to also include advertisers and businessmen in the list of forces that contributed to a formation of national consciousness in the United States between the 1920s and 1940s. Products sold on a national scale benefitted from national advertising and national identity, so George Hill and others like him were invested in expanding mass radio communication and

¹⁷⁵ When historical accounts of the 1930s and 1940s mention *Your Hit Parade*, *Kay Kyser's Musical College*, or the other shows sponsored by Lucky Strike, they almost always mention the advertising on the program. This is unlike contemporary and historical accounts of other popular radio shows from this period like *Amos n' Andy* or *Mary Marlin*, even though these shows were also sponsored by major brands and corporations.

mainstream American culture. Advertisers were important actors in the growth of national consciousness among the American population, even though their reasons for supporting such a society were driven more by profit than anything else. The cultural definitions of national identity often times originated in corporate boardrooms and in the offices of advertisers like George Hill and is critical to an understanding of the diverse forces behind nationalism and the different motives Americans had for pursuing this shift.¹⁷⁶

Unlike any other kind of advertising, radio had no visual component. When a listener switched their radio on, they were greeted by a Habermasian combination of disembodied words, music, and sounds. As many observers and critics quickly noticed, though the sounds of radio were formless, they were still intrusive and often times actually harder to avoid than visual materials. Radio penetrated the home, bringing the outside world into the living room and the kitchen. Though magazines, newspapers, and other printed materials could also be carried into the home, a reader could turn the page or look away at any time. When the radio was switched on, its messages would always be heard regardless of whether the listener rejected them or not. This issue was particularly important when radio broadcasts began incorporating

¹⁷⁶ One of the first historians to explore the centralization and homogenization of American society was Daniel Boorstin, who discussed the impact of television and radio on the forging of a common American identity and experience in the 1930s and beyond in his 1967 work *The Americans: The National Experience*. Since then, books such as *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* by Lizabeth Cohen, and more recently like Saverio Giovacchini's *Hollywood Modernism: Film and Politics in the Age of the New Deal* have continued to focus on mass media and entertainment as the cultural forces that advanced a national, "American" society. Other works such as *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II* and *A Democracy At War: America's Fight at Home and Abroad in World War II* have turned more to the civic and political forces in society, arguing the designation of internal and external threats to society during World War II and other similar crises have coerced or persuaded Americans to adopt national identities. While all of these historians emphasize political, cultural, and social institutions as the major generators and promoters of national culture, they hardly address the impact of advertising on national identity. Doing so marginalizes the role of American business and advertisers in American national culture in this period, even though these groups had a vested interest in the expansion of national identity.

advertising in the late 1920s. If a listener wanted to hear their favorite shows, they would have to accept the commercials and announcements that came with them too.¹⁷⁷ Radio was also defined by time; it was not oriented spatially like physical print advertisements were. This meant that broadcasters only had a limited amount of time in which to expose listeners to their messages. The time aspect of radio would prove to be a major issue for advertisers transitioning from print, where a constant stream of messages designed to reach viewers was preferred. The old advertising adage that “repetition is reputation” would not have the same response from customers, as George Hill would quickly learn.¹⁷⁸ Navigating the temporality and structured format of radio while trying to keep listeners tuned into the sales message proved challenging at times. Far from being passive listeners, radio audiences in the early decades of radio were willing to turn their sets off or even boycott a program and its sponsor if they were not satisfied with its content.¹⁷⁹

Radio quickly became recognized as a device that organized listeners into groups as it broadcast programs across the United States. As the technology quickly advanced after the first commercial broadcasts in 1920, radio speakers allowed people to hear broadcasts communally in their homes, and created a popular space for communal listening.¹⁸⁰ In its first decade, radio was a small scale and routinely local form of entertainment. Broadcasting from one city or region to another required

¹⁷⁷ Dunlap Jr., 6. Also see Fox, 150.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 5

¹⁷⁹ For more see Kathy M. Newman, *Radio Active: Advertising and Consumer Activism, 1935-1947*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004.)

¹⁸⁰ Robert S. Lynd and Helen M. Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture*. (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1929), 270.

powerful radio transmitters that independent stations could not afford, so most created shows with home-grown talent for neighborhood audiences. The first program sponsored by Lucky Strike, *Nathan Glantz and His Men*, was introduced in this period. First aired in 1923, the show was only heard in New York City where it was broadcast by one station, WEAF.¹⁸¹ But even though radio was initially a local form of entertainment, it still helped organize Americans and bridge the gap between local and mass American culture in the United States.¹⁸²

The *Nathan Glantz* program, a music show, was canceled only a year later in early 1924. According to Glantz “advertising by radio does not pay,” and the expensive costs of maintaining an orchestra and buying radio time from WEAF seemed to outweigh any benefits.¹⁸³ Sponsoring a local radio show allowed Lucky Strike to combine entertainment and sales messages, but did not help the brand foster a national consciousness. In order for radio advertising to be effective, it seemed that shows sponsoring Lucky Strike would need to be broadcast nationally, and would have to make this abundantly clear to listeners. George Hill, who was still a junior level executive at the American Tobacco Company in 1924 was likely involved in the production of this first radio advertising campaign, and would not make the same mistakes years later when he funded nationally broadcast shows. It was important for

¹⁸¹ Though only a local station at the time, WEAF would become the flagship station of N.B.C when the broadcasting company was founded in 1926. Programs sponsored by Lucky Strike would continue to be recorded at WEAF throughout the 1930s and 1940s.

¹⁸² Local radio “helped ethnic groups to overcome internal divisions...and to become more unified ethnic communities.” Younger Americans in this period also used radio (and other forms of mass entertainment) to experience mass culture, though they preferred to mediate mass culture through their own ethnic peer groups. In any case, radio was still the vehicle through which Americans were brought together and exposed a more national form of American entertainment. Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago: 1919-1939*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 135.

¹⁸³ “Radio Notes and Gossip,” *New York Times*, February 17, 1924, p. XX14.

both the advertising and the entertainment portions of a sponsored show to be explicitly national. Missing this component was the reason why this early show did not produce dramatic results like later shows would.

Though it was initially a more localized form of entertainment, radio was quickly recognized by corporations and advertisers as a medium that could be adapted for a much larger audience. With their capital and national presence, the National Broadcasting Corporation and a few other large companies quickly came to dominate the entire industry within just a few years. While stations continued to carry some local programming; soap operas, musical variety shows, and a host of other nationally broadcast shows came to rule the airwaves by the early 1930s. The Radio Act of 1927 consolidated the industry to these national broadcasters and shut down many of the local and independent stations that catered to exclusively local audiences.¹⁸⁴

According to one observer in 1935, radio “carries people away from localism and gives them direct access to the more popular stereotypes in the national life.” With a radio, even the most remote listener became part of a national listening audience.¹⁸⁵

When listeners tuned into national broadcasts, they were often conscious that they were part of a larger American radio audience. By 1933, over half of the American population lived in homes with radios, far more than the previous decade. In 1940 well over 100 million Americans had access to radio programming in their homes.¹⁸⁶ And broadcasters constantly reminded their listeners of this fact, creating a

¹⁸⁴ Cohen, 141.

¹⁸⁵ Robert S. Lynd and Helen M. Lynd, *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1937), 264.

¹⁸⁶ “45,200,000 Radio Sets in US, Survey Reveals,” *Advertising Age* (December 11, 1939): 4.

picture of a “vast, unified, national” audience of which each listener was a part.¹⁸⁷

Franklin Roosevelt was one of these broadcasters, using his masterful fireside chats to give even the most remote listeners the sense that they were actually all sitting together with the president. In an era when large populations and geographic distance threatened to atomize and separate individuals, the intimate nature of radio created an illusion of unity that bonded Americans together.¹⁸⁸

Imagination was a critical part of the listening experience, since radio had no real images with which listeners could connect. “Wireless without prejudice serves everything that implies dissemination and community of feeling” a 1936 critique of radio noted, “and works against separateness and isolation.”¹⁸⁹ By constantly reminding listeners that they were part of a larger crowd, radio was able to construct an imagined national community. Listening to nationally broadcast programs fostered a sense of American identity.¹⁹⁰ By associating Lucky Strike with these nationally broadcast programs, George Hill was able to blend his brand into mass American culture in a way that radio audiences understood.

Throughout Hill’s career, the majority of Lucky Strike advertising on the air came in the form of sponsored programming, a format that many businesses preferred in radio’s first few decades. Instead of merely paying for commercial “spots” in

¹⁸⁷ Susan J. Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination*. (New York: Times Books, 1999), 133.

¹⁸⁸ Orrin Dunlap wrote in 1936 that “[Roosevelt’s] voice carries a feeling of intimacy with his audience as well as with his subject. He seems to be talking instead of reading. He apparently visualizes his millions of listeners, and through his feeling of close contact with them, makes them feel close to him. Dunlap, quoted in Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Three New Deals: Reflections on Roosevelt’s America, Mussolini’s Italy, and Hitler’s Germany, 1933-1939*. (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 2007), 58-59.

¹⁸⁹ Rudolph Arnheim, *Radio: An Art of Sound*. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 232.

¹⁹⁰ Douglas, 11.

between network shows, sponsors actually created and produced the entire shows that went on the air. “The trouble with most spot announcements,” Hill said, “is that they do not offer the listener anything in return for having to listen to the commercial.”¹⁹¹ The sponsored show gave advertisers a much longer period of time with the audience, allowing them to create much deeper connections between show, audience, and product. Using sponsored programming fit well with Hill’s controlling attitude towards advertising. Here, he was able to manipulate the entertainment portion of the show and help it mesh with Lucky Strike sales messages, something that could not be done as easily in newspapers or magazines. Since sponsoring linked a brand’s reputation to the program’s reputation, it was important to create an atmosphere that would keep listeners’ attention and emphasize certain ideas and themes. This was a key difference from regular spot commercials or print advertising where a brand stood on its own, more or less. In the listener’s mind, the show and the brand were inseparable, and both needed to hold up to public scrutiny in order to succeed. In Hill’s ongoing quest to sell Lucky Strike as a national brand for all Americans, this link to national broadcasting would be crucial to its success.

Sponsoring radio programming instead of relying on commercial spots was a way for Hill and his advertisers to camouflage advertising within popular entertainment. When Americans were introduced to radio in the 1920s a majority of stations broadcast independently and listeners did not hear corporate advertising on their radios nearly as much as they would after NBC and the other national

¹⁹¹ "Sellers of Sales: American Tobacco Co. Gets Results." *Broadcasting* 20, no. 14 (April 14, 1941): 22.

corporations took control of the airwaves.¹⁹² Tying advertising and entertainment together in this way helped make sponsored programs more acceptable to a generation of listeners unfamiliar with commercialized broadcasting. The bleak atmosphere created by the Great Depression also produced a listening audience that was critical of advertising and its place in the American business system.¹⁹³ Spot commercials were abrupt interruptions to the entertainment portions of broadcasts and could easily be skipped and ignored by listeners because they were played at separate times. It was much harder for a listener to avoid advertising if it was integrated into the same entertainment they had tuned to hear in the first place. Associating the Lucky Strike brand with popular broadcasting entertainment also helped generate a feeling of good will towards the sponsor. “If I did not already smoke your cigarettes I certainly would do so merely as a slight appreciation of the pleasure I have had through listening to the weekly programs of the Lucky Strike Orchestra,” one faithful listener wrote in 1931. “It is my earnest hope that the orchestra will continue on the air as long as Luckies are on the market.”¹⁹⁴ Listeners understood that without the sponsor’s support, their favorite shows would not be on the air.

Despite any good will that *Your Hit Parade* and the rest of Lucky Strike’s programs generated, they still contained implicit and explicit advertising that any listener could detect. Advertising on the radio could not be skipped over and was not easily ignored like print advertisements in magazines or newspapers. Though listeners

¹⁹² Cohen, 138-141.

¹⁹³ For more on popular responses to advertising during the Great Depression see Inger L. Stole’s *Advertising on Trial* and Kathy Newman’s *Radio Active*.

¹⁹⁴ Dunlap, 103.

always had the choice of turning the radio off, this would also result in the loss of the entertainment they were listening for in the first place. Film, theater, and other older forms of leisure and entertainment were not as manifestly commercial as radio was, and the interruptions that kept audiences from their shows became a common complaint. Going as far as calling one Lucky Strike show an “excellent dance orchestra which punctuates the advertising announcements broadcast by the Lucky Strike people,” one critic claimed that listeners “have become so hardened to the blatant advertising...they automatically become deaf when the announcer’s voice starts.”¹⁹⁵ The advertising that the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* became well known for likely did drive some listeners to ignore sales messages or even seek out other entertainments. This criticism was common on all programs produced under George Hill’s direction. “As a representative of this clan [of listeners], I wish to say that Kay Kyser’s Musical Kollege is one fine hour of entertainment,” wrote Althea Bruwer, a listener from Virginia, “the faulty moments are the ramblings of the [announcer]. When this advertising stunt was first started, it was a novelty but now it is becoming monotonous.” But ignoring this advertising was not as easy as listeners may have thought. Although Bruwer did admit that she grew tired of the commercial announcements on the show, she also identified herself as one of “millions” who listened to the show.¹⁹⁶ In her letter to the editor of *Radio Mirror*, she assumes there were fans of the show in every corner of the United States, and that they all knew who sponsored the show. This type of comment was common. Radio magazines often published fan letters from listeners, and when a Lucky Strike show was discussed

¹⁹⁵ “Regarding Direct Radio Advertising,” *Radio Broadcast*, June 1929, 73.

¹⁹⁶ “Listen, Sponsors!,” *Radio Mirror*, September 1938. 5.

writers frequently identified themselves as one of many listeners. Regardless of any irritation Hill's shows may have caused, their audiences were conscious of their national identity on some level. And by sponsoring these shows, Lucky Strike stood to benefit from the association between the brand and mainstream American society.

From the beginning of his tenure as president of American Tobacco, George Hill was the driving force behind radio advertising. In the late 1920s when commercial radio emerged on the national networks, most large advertising agencies did not immediately see its potential as a major advertising platform. Albert Lasker, president of the Lord & Thomas advertising agency and the creative force behind many Lucky Strike campaigns, was not convinced of the usefulness of radio advertising until many years later. Lasker considered Hill's first program, the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour*, to be more of a "vanity piece" than an effective form of advertising. This opinion echoes many others in the early years of radio, who believed that radio advertising could only generate "good-will" from the audience and nothing more.¹⁹⁷ Hill would later respond to this approach, remarking that an agency that only utilizes radio for its good-will "does not know the reason for sales, and has not the intelligence enough to find the sales reason that will induce the public to buy your goods."¹⁹⁸ Though Hill did receive creative and technical support from Lasker and his agency, his willingness to use radio as a serious platform for advertising was unique.

¹⁹⁷ In his biography of Albert Lasker, Jeffrey Cruikshank and Arthur Schultz note that "As far as Lord & Thomas was concerned, the *Lucky Strike Hour* was more of a vanity piece than successful advertising. Lord & Thomas's American Tobacco account history makes no mention of radio campaigns, and Lasker later asserted that radio was not particularly effective for the company." Cruikshank and Schultz, 272.

¹⁹⁸ The American Tobacco Company, *Radio: A Modern Advertising Force: It's Proper Commercial Use*. (The American Tobacco Company, 1938), 31.

Along with his willingness to divert a significant portion of his advertising budget to radio, Hill was often personally involved in the rehearsals and performances of broadcasts. In the studio, Hill's decisions were final. If a program did not sound right to him for any reason it would be immediately changed. "A switch is turned...All listen and look at Hill. Hill just listens. From time to time a member of the [American Tobacco] committee will get up and dance to some of the numbers to check the orchestra's tempo and viability." This account of a practice for the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* is typical of Hill's personal involvement in the process. "Too blue,' snap[ped] Hill. 'I don't like those pianos. Make that rhythm snappier. Put more pep in it.'"¹⁹⁹ Hill was reported to have had a radio playing in every room of his Hudson River mansion when he went home in the evening, so that he could monitor every second of his shows as they broadcast. If an announcer so much as emphasized the wrong part of the word Lucky Strike, the station could immediately expect an irate call from the chief executive, and possibly even a new announcer on the show the next week.²⁰⁰

Perhaps Hill oversaw the production of these radio shows because he valued radio differently than many of his contemporaries. He did not trust advertising and broadcast executives to generate programs that would effectively sell his beloved cigarettes in an effective manner. But, as much as he tried Hill could not be personally involved in each broadcast so he also distributed a number of workbooks, memorandums, and other documents to his employees in which he laid out the principles on which Lucky Strike radio advertising was based. "Radio," he contended,

¹⁹⁹ The American Tobacco Company, *Radio: A Modern Advertising Force*, 31.

²⁰⁰ "George Washington Hill Dies," *Life*, September 23, 1946, 47.

“is in fact ‘salesmanship-in-person.’”²⁰¹ Hill had realized radio could create an intimate atmosphere between the advertiser and the listener in his home, though he preferred to create a noisy dancehall instead of a quiet fireside.²⁰² In the 1920s and 1930s, many Americans felt threatened and anxious about the spread of mass American culture into their lives. The rise of a national consciousness was not met favorably in many homes. But, radio’s personal tone was ideally suited to promote national identity in a positive way that was met with less hostility than other centralizing forces at the time.²⁰³ Like personalities such as Franklin D. Roosevelt and Father Coughlin, George Hill also used radio to emphasize and support feelings of national identity with broadcasts that appealed to millions of Americans. When Hill began advertising on the radio in earnest in 1928 he would quickly create a personal space where listeners were encouraged to buy Lucky Strike cigarettes and think of themselves in national terms, two different ideas that were blended together into a single concept on the air.

The *Lucky Strike Radio Hour*, sometimes called the *Lucky Strike Dance Hour*, began each week’s broadcast at 10pm Saturday night. Each show began with a performance of “This is My Lucky Day,” a song that reveals much about the kind of atmosphere George Hill wanted to associate with Lucky Strike. Originally written for

²⁰¹ In one work book, Hill wrote sample commercial announcements to be copied by writers, and even went as far as to include a sample schedule of a radio program that lists the exact order of each song, announcement, and station break, down to the exact second. *Radio: A Modern Advertising Force*, Forward page 1 and 30-34.

²⁰² Lears, 335.

²⁰³ Alan Brinkley has written that “the people who chafed at the intrusion of alien cultural values into their communities were often the same ones who gathered regularly before their radios, the most powerful vehicles for the transmission of those values.” Radio encouraged a positive social environment in which Americans could listen to programs together in their living rooms and together as a nation. See Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, & the Great Depression*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), 156-159.

Broadway's *George White Scandals of 1926*, the theme song of the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* was a well-known tune that had been popularized and distributed nationally via most major recording labels and sheet music companies.²⁰⁴ Indirectly advertising the sponsoring brand by repeating the word "lucky" dozens of times, this theme song began the hour immediately connecting the night's entertainment, Broadway, and the Lucky Strike brand together in a single musical statement.²⁰⁵ At the conclusion of this first song, an announcer's voice came over the airwaves, welcoming the audience to the show and setting the mood for the rest of the hour's entertainment. "Good evening, my friends. And so begins this hour of dance music presented for your pleasure by the manufactures of Lucky Strike Cigarettes." This verbally reinforced the musical message that listeners had heard only moments before, highlighting the sponsoring brand in an unambiguous manner that did not leave listeners guessing from where their entertainment came. "B.A. Rolfe and his Lucky Strike Dance Orchestra will be heard in the tunes that made Broadway, Broadway. Should you sit out a dance, it is suggested: Reach for a Lucky." Following this short introduction, the announcer would name the next song or two that would be played, and the orchestra would begin.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Before The *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* adopted the song, a version of the song was recorded by the star vocal group The Revelers and produced by the Victor Talking Machine Company. Katherine Spring, *Saying It With Songs: Popular Music and the Coming of Sound to Hollywood Cinema*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 23.

²⁰⁵ Later on, the song "Happy Days are Here Again" replaced "It's My Lucky Day" as the show's theme song. While the song did not mention the word "lucky" anywhere, it was still effective in equating the show and sponsor with national American culture. Written and first featured in the 1930 film *Chasing Rainbows*, it was later used as Franklin Roosevelt's 1932 presidential campaign song, and was well throughout the country.

²⁰⁶ *Radio Continuity, Lucky Strike Radio Hour*, Broadcast Script, Tobacco Documents Online. May 4, 1929, 1.

Though the opening was brief, it articulated to the listener the basic elements of the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour*. First that the musical and verbal components of the broadcast were to mirror each other. The same feelings and emotions that were assigned to the show's musical entertainment were also intended to also be linked to spoken descriptions of Lucky Strike in the listener's mind. Second, the announcer directly mentioned the Lucky Strike brand in the same sentences about dance music and Broadway, insinuating that without Lucky Strike this entertainment would not be possible. Having the Lucky Strike Dance Orchestra, a representation of the cigarette brand in the shape of men and instruments, was a way to blend Lucky Strike and national popular culture together into one program that was not quite an advertising message or pure entertainment. Neither part existed without the other on the show, and every time the announcer spoke for the rest of the night he would always mention the name "Lucky Strike Dance Orchestra" before he introduced the next song. The announcer's opening also made it quite clear that this was a dance program, not an hour of opera or light music. No, the Lucky Strike Dance Orchestra only played popular music with an up-beat rhythm and tempo. Though each of these messages would be reinforced throughout the rest of the program, their explicit inclusion at the beginning of the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* helped create an environment designed to promote Lucky Strike as a popular national brand for an American audience.

Just as the announcer told radio listeners, Hill insisted that the songs played on the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* played "tunes that made Broadway, Broadway."²⁰⁷ Though which songs were played each week was always in flux, they always had to meet this standard; it was a central part of the musical formula for the show. "Not the

²⁰⁷ *Radio Continuity, Lucky Strike Radio Hour*, 1.

songs that *are making* Broadway Broadway,” a company memo insisted, “but the songs that *made* Broadway Broadway.” Hill believed that “people like to hear things their ears are attuned to, not new numbers. Songs that have so rung in the public ear that they mean something, recall something, start with a background of pleasant familiarity.”²⁰⁸ Music that already was a recognizable part of a national popular culture was what a national listening audience wanted to hear, and only very rarely did song selections include new or unknown numbers.

Unlike *Your Hit Parade*'s (the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour*'s successor) weekly surveys of music sales, it is not clear exactly who chose the songs in each week's program. It may have been Hill and other executives from American Tobacco, or could likely have been either employees of Lord & Thomas or N.B.C. Regardless, these songs always adhered to the “popular song” formula. An examination of the continuity scripts from 1928 and 1929 reveal that the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* emphasized tunes published by large, nationally known firms from Tin Pan Alley, the dominant force in popular American music at the time. These songs had already been distributed and well-received nationally and were often established hits and had connections to Broadway or early sound films. It was uncommon for songs copyrighted by lesser known music companies to be featured on the show.²⁰⁹

When songs were played by Lucky Strike conductor B.A. Rolfe and the orchestra, they were arranged in a manner that kept them recognizable to a national listening audience. In an era where listeners cared more about the actual song than any particular artist's rendition, it was common for arrangers to modify a tune and

²⁰⁸ *Lucky Strike Radio Hour Copy Formula*, Tobacco Documents Online. March 6, 1931, 3.

²⁰⁹ Spring, 22-23.

insert their own unique personality into it. This was, however, not the case on the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour*. Hill liked to call it music “a la Rolfe, served hot without any dressing.” What this meant was that song introductions would be skipped and replaced with repetitions of more recognizable choruses. Songs would also be played to the “characteristic Lucky Strike Dance Orchestra tempo, which is lively, rather fast, and is an essential characteristic of the program.” Any sort of “frills and furbelows”- extravagant or unexpected alterations to the song- were not allowed.²¹⁰ Maintaining the popular version of the song helped the Lucky Strike brand align itself with an already proven, acceptable form of national culture.

Since the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* was a music show, the majority of the hour’s content was made up of between fifteen and eighteen songs. There were only two sources of dialogue- the anonymous announcer and occasionally Rolfe or the other conductors who came to replace him over the years. Dialogue was subordinated to music on the show.²¹¹ But, listeners never forgot that there was also a commercial component to the show as well. Counting the opening, there were at least four copy announcements in each week’s broadcast, each of which promoted Lucky Strike in a variety of different ways. Typically, a program would have two sixty second advertising announcements, which would be played about twenty and thirty five minutes into the show. Originally these longer spots featured celebrity testimonials, but were switched to repeat current newspaper and magazine copy themes as

²¹⁰ *Lucky Strike Radio Hour Copy Formula*, 3.

²¹¹ Even when testimonials were given, the announcer would read the endorsements that were inserted into broadcast scripts. In a typical program, there would be less than ten minutes of total dialogue. Spring, 24.

endorsements fell out of favor in American advertising.²¹² Regardless, both of these advertising techniques served to connect the radio to print advertising campaigns.

When these commercial spots borrowed from concurrent print campaigns, they also took the same ideas about gender, class, and national identity that Americans would have seen in Lucky Strike ads in magazines and newspapers. In the late 1920s and first years of the 1930s, Lucky Strike advertisements often linked the product with a higher class lifestyle. And along with these print ads that promoted financial comfort and featured opera stars and other refined figures, radio audiences could expect to hear testimonials from socialites like Marjorie Oelrichs. “Since Lucky Strike is my favorite cigarette, it is the only one I serve to my friends,” she claimed in 1928, “it is surprising to note how many of them prefer Luckies to all other cigarettes.”²¹³ No doubt these friends were also upper class, suggesting that Lucky Strike was the brand for the socio-economic elite. Beginning in 1927, Lucky Strike began directly targeting women in its print advertisements. Though women were smoking in increasing numbers by the end of the 1920s, it was still stigmatized and they were often prevented from smoking in public. In order to reverse this taboo and encourage women to buy and use cigarettes more frequently, George Hill pushed a series of campaigns targeting women in a variety of ways; most notably by advertising that Lucky Strike would help maintain a slender figure. The modern woman of the 1920s and 1930s, liberated from conventional gender roles and more publically active, would need Lucky Strike to help her stay thin and beautiful. Rosalie Nelson, the poster girl for Lucky Strike and symbol of the modern all-American

²¹² Marchand, 384.

²¹³ *Radio Continuity, Lucky Strike Radio Hour*, September 22, 1928, 7.

woman, reported in a 1928 broadcast that “I’m a lucky girl because I’ve found a new way to keep my figure trim. Whenever the desire for a sweet tempts me, I light up a Lucky Strike.”²¹⁴ Lucky Strike targeted men just as much as women in their advertising, promoting the cigarette as part of active athletic lifestyles too. George Hill wanted to sell to a universal American audience. The message was clear: buying a pack of Luckies was more than just buying cigarettes; it was a symbol that a consumer could use to prove they were part of a national modern American society.

Constructing gender and social identity through Lucky Strike was not limited to the explicit advertising portion of the show. George Hill designed the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* to mesh advertising and entertainment into an inseparable combination, and themes that were explicitly stated in commercial spots were also expressed through the musical content of the show. To mirror the high-class airs of the program, the songs played by B.A. Rolfe were often designated as waltzes or tangos by the announcer, instead of dances with lower-class distinctions. Dance music was a form of entertainment that both men and women enjoyed, a fact that radio studies from the period often noted. Unlike sports programs or soap operas that appealed more to men or women, dance music held a broader appeal to both.²¹⁵ Dancing also promoted the same fit and healthy lifestyle seen in Lucky Strike ads. Having this continuity between print campaigns, in-show advertising messages, and the entertainment portion of the program allowed the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* to promote Lucky Strike

²¹⁴ *Radio Continuity, Lucky Strike Radio Hour* October 13, 1928, 23.

²¹⁵ Hadley Cantril, *The Psychology of Radio*. (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1935), 76.

explicitly or implicitly for the entire show, even though the announcer only spoke for a fraction of the total time.

Connections to gender and class on the air would differ over the years just like contemporary print ads. In some broadcasts, advertising themes would target men more directly than women and vice versa. After the first few years of the Great Depression, explicit references to refined upper class individuals waned as the American public settled into economic hard times. However, the idea of a national listening audience was always stressed in both copy and music. Always addressing the audience as a crowd, the announcer often directly referred to listeners as the men or the women “of America” and called Lucky Strike the “choice of millions” of Americans. Between this identification of a national audience and the continual play of songs chosen for their national appeal, Hill was able to create an expressly American environment on the air, devoid of any regional differences. And as the sponsor of the broadcasts, Lucky Strike became both a creator and indelible piece of this nationalism.

In her study of Chicago in the late 1920s and 1930s, Lizabeth Cohen has argued that many Americans thought of themselves more in local and ethnic terms than as a national American group. Especially among first and second generation American families, personal identities were generally not regarded in national terms. Beginning in the late 1920s, however, younger people increasingly began using mainstream popular culture to bridge the gap between their old-world parents and national American society. Though they still consciously kept their local identities as Jews, Italians, or Poles, radio shows like the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* helped

working-class youths become more American.²¹⁶ Though this inclusion in national American society was not the only identity these local groups had, radio still helped erode rigid regional cultures and open access into an audience that was aware of its national character. And among younger Americans, the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* was the most popular show on the air. In a 1932 survey, high school aged boys and girls both overwhelmingly chose the Lucky Strike broadcast as their favorite program.²¹⁷ While they may not have smoked at the time, young people participating in mainstream popular culture to feel more American did prefer to listen to the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour*. When this generation came of age a few years later, many of them would buy the cigarettes that had sponsored national entertainment, Lucky Strike.

Though they did make up a majority of the listening audience, younger crowds were not the only ones listening to the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour*.²¹⁸ Millions of older Americans across the country also tuned in Saturday nights to hear the week's dance numbers. The program was carried by the NBC Red Network, and broadcast on between forty and fifty stations each year.²¹⁹ The Red Network was broadcast nationally, and had stations in major cities across the United States. Ultimately, the success that Lucky Strike found in their first popular music show did not last. The initially high ratings that the show received in 1928 gradually declined as the dance craze of the 1920s subsided in favor of ballads and other types of songs.

²¹⁶ Cohen, 147.

²¹⁷ Young boys and girls both chose the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* over broadcasts of baseball games, Amos 'n Andy, and a number of other nationally distributed programs. Jeannette Kyle, "Whither Goest Thou, Modern Youth?" *The English Journal* 21, no. 8 (October 1932): 646; Also see "Lucky Strike to Present 52 Hour Network Programs," *Advertising Age* (March 23, 1935): 25.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ McNeil, 16-18.

By 1933 it seemed that Lucky Strike was not in tune with the American people and their taste in music. Along with this widening gap between the program's music and the national favorites, the show's regular commercial spots and promotions for Lucky Strike also drove listeners away. "I, like many other listeners, am sick tired and disgusted by the amount of disgusting and puerile hooey of advertising I must listen to in order to hear snatches and ragged ends of splendid programs," one Ohio listener wrote in 1933, the show's final year.²²⁰ It seemed listeners were willing to stand radio advertising as long as the entertainment portion of the show was still acceptable. As the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour's* ratings dropped and listeners remained hostile to the ads the show, it was quietly taken off the air.²²¹

The end of the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* was not the end of George Hill's experience with radio advertising. Taking the lessons learned from his first nationally broadcast show, Hill returned Lucky Strike to the airwaves a year later on a new program that did play the nation's favorite songs. And this time Hill made sure the audience knew it.

It was clear that the underlying formulas Hill developed for the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* were successful in generating a large national audience and connecting mainstream popular culture with the Lucky Strike brand. Reacting to changes in national taste and sustaining this audience was trickier. Together with advertisers and writers at Lord & Thomas, Hill devised a formula for a new music show that would

²²⁰ "We Don't Bet," *Radio Guide*, February 18, 1933, 22.

²²¹ Harrison B. Summers, *A Thirty-Year History of Programs Carried on National Radio Networks in the United States 1926-1956*, (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 20, 25. Also see Jim Cox, *Music Radio: The Great Performers and Programs of the 1920s through the Early 1960s*. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2005), 322.

be able to react to changes in audience favorites and make listeners feel more engaged in the program. The result was *Your Hit Parade*, a broadcast so successful that it would remain on the air for twenty-four years, long after George Hill died in 1946. The show was Lucky Strike's most enduring legacy in American culture and one of the clearest examples of how the ATC utilized radio to promote national identity.

When it was first aired in April 1935, *Your Hit Parade* used a "scientific" system that made the program's music appear to be an authentic selection of the nation's favorite songs that particular week. According to reminders on the show and articles published in fan magazines and newspapers, each week's songs were selected using a "fool-proof" system that determined the current national favorites. A staff of over fifty analysts was kept at American Tobacco who tabulated reports from "band leaders, songs most played on the radio and in the juke boxes, and a survey of sales in sheet music and phonograph records." Whichever songs were requested or bought more would be determined and arranged for that week's broadcast.²²² A sense of mystery surrounded the week's song selections, which were reportedly transported from the American Tobacco building to the recording studio in an armored car. No one knew which songs were the winners for the week until they played on the air.²²³ Reports of listeners getting together at Hit Parade parties each Saturday night and betting on the week's top songs were common.²²⁴

²²² *Radio Continuity, Your Hit Parade*, February 22, 1941, 125; also see, "Tune-In Bulletin for April 29, May 6, 13, and 20!" *Radio Mirror*, June 1939, 52.

²²³ Even the Hit Parade's performers were kept from the secretive song list. While on a visit to the White House, Hit Parade singer Frank Sinatra was asked by Franklin D. Roosevelt what the week's number one song was. Not knowing himself, he was unable to answer the disappointed president. Cox, 327.

²²⁴ "Tune-In Bulletin for April 29, May 6, 13, and 20!" *Radio Mirror*, June 1939, 52.

Perhaps the most important innovation on the show was the song countdown, a technique that has revolutionized the broadcast music format and is still in use today. The Hit Paraders Orchestra would begin the hour by playing the eighth, ninth, and tenth most popular songs of the week. Building suspense and excitement as they got closer to the bottom of their list, the orchestra would not play the number one song until the end of the show.²²⁵ Playing the week's selections in this order was a way to keep audiences tuned in and excited for the duration of the program. And the more listeners got excited and paid attention to the show the better for Hill, who imbedded sales messages for Lucky Strike cigarettes frequently in between songs. A typical episode of *Your Hit Parade* referred to the Lucky Strike brand about twenty times, or an average of once about every three minutes. Though *Your Hit Parade* was every bit as commercial as the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour*, audiences were more willing to put up with and listen to advertising because of the excitement generated by the music and its performance.

Your Hit Parade was not just a music program; it was an exciting national competition and a weekly lens into which listeners could see what Americans all across the country were listening to. With the suspense of a contest and the certainty of statistics, *Your Hit Parade* helped listeners feel they were directly involved in the song selection process. The show's title, emphasizing the word "Your," reflected the populist rhetoric and national themes surrounding the program. Listening to the show,

²²⁵ Songs were not played in exact sequential order, sometimes the show would start with the number nine song of the week and other times it would start with the number ten or eight song. But, each program did generally move from the week's least popular songs to the most popular by the end.

audiences were assured they were hearing the songs they themselves chose.²²⁶

Lawrence Levine has argued the shows Americans liked and “elevated to prominence” in the 1930s and 1940s were ones that adhered to formulaic structures yet also had ample room for surprise. When *Your Hit Parade* came on the radio, listeners could always expect a level of comfort and certainty and yet a fair amount of variation and excitement every time.²²⁷ That Americans chose to listen to *Your Hit Parade* in far greater numbers than many other products of popular culture available in this period shows how this commercial radio broadcast with explicit nationalist language was well received by audiences.

References to the United States and a national American audience were even more explicit than the advertising messages spoken in each episode of *Your Hit Parade*. The announcer’s dialogue was similar to what listeners heard on the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour*, but instead of focusing on Broadway and the songs that Tin Pan Alley and the major song producers promoted, listeners were told that song selections came directly from the American people. At the same time, *Your Hit Parade* did not lose sight of local differences in music either. Even if a song was not the nation’s number one choice any particular week, it often was the most popular song in at least

²²⁶ There are many reports that the real selection process on *Your Hit Parade* was not as accurate and truthful as the show claimed. There are often large discrepancies between the show’s song picks and other music survey sources. In addition, music producers allegedly bribed bandleaders and other people who were part of the selection process. One Hit Parade conductor would later recall that “there was a lot of money involved...It wasn’t all legit either...there was a way of influencing the people who filled out the questionnaires.” Harry Sosnik, quoted in Phillip K. Eberly, *Music in the Air: America’s Changing Tastes in Popular Music, 1920-1980*, (New York: Hastings House, 1982), 127.

²²⁷ In *The Folklore of Industrial Society*, Levine writes that “Audiences of the Great Depression [and beyond] were able to differentiate and choose among the myriad products of Popular Culture that they were confronted with. It is precisely the choices they made that give us insight into their attitudes and feelings.” Shows like *Your Hit Parade* were beloved by audiences in part because “not all is certainty; within the formulas there is room for variation and surprise. The ending may be guaranteed, but the route to it can take twists and turns.” Lawrence Levine, *The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 297.

one city or region. One example of this was the song “I’m Sitting High on a Hilltop” which ranked tenth one week in 1936. According to the announcer, “it has a specially loyal following at Annapolis where it’s the hit of this week.”²²⁸ The names of cities and other local areas were mentioned constantly by the announcer, reminding listeners that no matter where they were or what songs they liked, they were still part of a national listening audience that was made up of many different places that were all part of the same United States.²²⁹ Here, on *Your Hit Parade*, Lucky Strike provided listeners with a way to personally participate in cultivating a nationalist ethos with millions of other Americans through mainstream popular culture.

The performances on *Your Hit Parade* were designed by the ATC to erase any indications of racial or ethnic diversity in music and audiences. Belief in a unified mass audience meant that broadcasts should not recognize regional, ethnic, or cultural differences in listeners. When a song was played on the show, the Hit Parade Orchestra was told that “melody should always stand out. Rhythm and bass should be emphasized.” Hill imagined songs that inspired every listener to get out of their chair and dance: “accent the tempo; give it plenty of sparkle and shoulder shake.”²³⁰ The original genre or cultural flavor that a song may have had when it was originally written was ironed out for performance on *Your Hit Parade* just as other Lucky Strike ads excluded non-white groups from their visions of modernity and mass society. Variation risked losing potential listeners, and by extension, potential customers and

²²⁸ *Radio Continuity, Your Hit Parade*. January 4, 1936, 9.

²²⁹ It is important to note, however, that the songs of *Your Hit Parade* always had wide national appeal, even though they may have only been number one in a single area. Songs that were exclusively popular in a particular region or city were not played. Local choices in music were only allowed as long as it still meshed with the national mainstream.

²³⁰ *Radio: A Modern Advertising Force*, 14.

profits. Musicians were told that “the stringent rule is...that the music must be played simply and clearly so that the tune is easily recognized.”²³¹ According to some accounts, Hill’s insistence that every musician conform to this strict performance standard caused irritated Frank Sinatra so much that he quit the show.²³²

Americans across the country responded positively to the nationalist and populist themes on *Your Hit Parade* as evidenced by the consistently high ratings the show received. In the show’s debut year, an average of 13.3 percent of the 22.5 million American homes with radios were tuned into *Your Hit Parade* each week. In the following years, as the percentage of all American homes with radios steadily increased, an even larger proportion of radios were tuned into to the show. As more Americans came into regular contact with radio, they were also listening to *Your Hit Parade* in greater numbers as well. At the same time, the major radio networks were rapidly expanding in the late 1930s, bringing national radio programs to an increasingly large geographical area. What was a string of stations concentrated on the east coast near New York and Chicago in 1930 became a dense national network that reached out into rural areas previously isolated from distant urban centers by the start of World War II.²³³

By the early 1940s, close to 6 million homes, or sixteen percent of total American households, kept coming back to *Your Hit Parade* and the accompanying

²³¹ “Music on Lucky Strike “Hit Parade” is Part of Advertisement.” *Printer’s Ink Monthly* (May 1941): 44.

²³² “George Washington Hill Dies,” 47.

²³³ By the 1940s, shows sponsored by Lucky Strike were broadcast on the CBS and NBC, each of which had over 120 stations across the United States. Network Maps, *Broadcasting 1945*. Volume 28, Number 11YB, 278-296.

Lucky Strike advertising.²³⁴ Since Americans often listened to the radio in groups and not individually, it is likely that a far greater portion of the population was actually listening to *Your Hit Parade* than these numbers indicate. Either way, it is clear that as Americans became more integrated into a national listening audience connected by popular culture and radio they turned to *Your Hit Parade* as a way to connect with the rest of the country. By integrating advertising into this national entertainment, George Hill was able to associate the same themes and values with Lucky Strike as well.

Though regular commercial spots frequented *Your Hit Parade*, they were not the only piece of the advertising component that the American Tobacco Company and Lord & Thomas built into the broadcast. A number of slogans were introduced and repeated frequently by the announcer. This was not a new development for *Your Hit Parade*, as the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* made use of the slogan “Its toasted” that was used in Lucky Strike print ads as far back as 1917. But on *Your Hit Parade*, slogans and other attention-grabbing sound devices became much more commonplace. “It’s Luckies 2 to 1,” “A Light Smoke,” and “L.S.M.F.T./Lucky Strike Means Fine Tobacco” were among the phrases that listeners could count on hearing multiple times each broadcast. Though many listeners complained that these slogans were too annoying, Hill’s slogans and other on-air gimmicks became, according to one

²³⁴ In 1943, *Your Hit Parade* averaged a 19.1 rating on the C.E. Hooper broadcast rating scale, which meant that of all radios in the United States, 19.1 percent of were dialed to *Your Hit Parade* each week. That same year, 30,800,000 American homes (83.6%) owned radios. For a list of *Your Hit Parade*’s annual ratings, see *A Thirty Year History of Programs Carried on National Radio Networks in the United States 1926-1956*. For ownership of radio sets per American household see Christopher H. Sterling, and John M. Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting*. 3rd ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002), 862.

historian, “part of American folklore.”²³⁵ Regardless of any irritation they may have caused, Lucky Strike slogans still managed to stick in the minds of listeners.

It is impossible to say exactly how the radio programs sponsored by Lucky Strike cigarettes affected Americans. Radio audiences were by no means passive listeners, and did not simply accept messages that broadcasters and advertisers aimed at them. Determining how a listener responded to an episode of *Your Hit Parade* in 1941 or whether listening to the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* helped a listener become more nationally conscious in 1929 is difficult, since listeners could often interpret the same message in dramatically different ways. But, it seems that George Hill and the American Tobacco Company believed in the power of radio advertising and its ability to make the American population think of itself in more national terms than it had before. A nationally-conscious community of potential customers was much easier to sell cigarettes to than separated regions with their own peculiarities and unique characteristics. The more uniform Americans were in their tastes and likes, the easier it would be for Lucky Strike cigarettes to sell nationally. Any method that would help in this way was worth its weight in gold to a company like American Tobacco. The amount of resources the company put into radio advertising reveals that it recognized the value in national identity and worked to contribute to this consciousness.

The ATC was the first cigarette manufacturer to sponsor nationally broadcast radio programs; it took years for Lucky Strike’s rivals to finally create a significant presence for themselves on the air. Camel and Chesterfield cigarettes sponsored a string of minor shows in the 1930s, but they never received consistently high ratings like the *Lucky Strike Dance Orchestra* or *Your Hit Parade*. Even when Lucky Strike

²³⁵ Norman Finkelstein, quoted in Cox, 330.

was one of six major cigarette manufacturers on the air in the late 1930s and 1940s, its shows had the highest annual ratings.²³⁶

“Radio has produced results for the American Tobacco Co. ever since we started to use it back in 1927...” an ATC executive declared in a 1941 interview, “we’re satisfied that radio is producing results for us because we can see it in our increased business.”²³⁷ Hill was an early believer in radio’s commercial potential, and he spent the rest of his career exploring the medium and using it to sell his beloved Lucky Strikes. And it seems that his faith was rewarded. Hill steadily increased spending on radio advertising throughout his presidency at American Tobacco. In 1928, the year that the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* debuted, annual spending on radio amounted to slightly under \$150,000, a fraction of the total Lucky Strike advertising budget. Ten years later, American Tobacco spent over sixteen times that amount on *Your Hit Parade* and seven other radio programs that reached a far greater proportion of the American people. At this point radio was the largest part of American Tobacco’s advertising strategy, costing the company far more than their newspaper or magazine campaigns.²³⁸

If Hill’s decision to spend so much time and resources advertising on radio is a sign of his explicit attempts to foster national consciousness and associate it with a brand, then perhaps the sales of Lucky Strike can reveal how Americans responded to

²³⁶ The only year between 1928 and 1946 that Lucky Strike was not the top cigarette brand on the radio was 1944, when programs sponsored by Camel had a total Hooper rating of 26.7 to Lucky Strike’s 42.0. Most years, Lucky Strike shows had total Hooper ratings that were between six and ten points ahead of the closest competitor. See Figure 4.

²³⁷ “Sellers of Sales,” *Broadcasting*, April 1941. 22.

²³⁸ “*American Tobacco Company Network Radio Advertising to April 1939*,” also see Borden, 231.

this radio advertising. As spending on radio advertising increased, so did Lucky Strike sales. After 1928, consumption of the cigarettes increased by about 8 billion units to 44.6 billion in 1931, only three years after the *Lucky Strike Radio Hour* debuted. Throughout the 1930s, sales of Lucky Strike remained much more stable than any of their competitors. Despite a major decrease in the purchasing power of the American citizen during the Great Depression, Lucky Strike sales remained higher and much more stable than any other brand on the market.²³⁹

In 1946, the advertising trade journal *Printer's Ink* reported that 103.5 billion Lucky Strike cigarettes were sold that year, putting the brand 15 billion units over its nearest competitor.²⁴⁰ In a sense, this statistic was to be George Hill's epitaph. That year, after twenty years as president of the American Tobacco Company, Hill died of heart trouble, leaving a large void in the tobacco and advertising industries. Hill's impact in American society is as large and as complicated as the radio campaigns he developed during his career. By the time of his death, Americans were smoking over 300 billion cigarettes annually, and over one third of them were Lucky Strikes.²⁴¹ But Hill's legacy goes much further than the tobacco industry. Any account of popular American culture from the Depression and Second World War is incomplete without radio. The *Lucky Strike Radio Hour*, *Your Hit Parade*, Kay Kyser, Jack Benny, and the myriad other programs that were created, produced, and distributed using Lucky

²³⁹ Between 1929 and 1939, an average of 37.9 billion Lucky Strike cigarettes were sold annually, well over a billion more than their closest competitor, R.J. Reynolds's Camel cigarette brand. Borden, 227.

²⁴⁰ "Article from *Printer's Ink* in 'Publicity Articles 1927-1949,'" 1949, American Tobacco Collection, Tobacco Documents Online, 551.

²⁴¹ Obituary in "Publicity Articles 1927-1949." 1949, American Tobacco Collection, Tobacco Documents Online, 537.

Strike advertising dollars became part and parcel of national American identity in this period, and in turn contributed to feelings of national consciousness.

Chapter 4: The Smoke of War: The Collapse of Unity within Lucky Strike Advertising, 1940-1946

For Bill Storr, the Second World War did not begin on December 7th, 1942.

Writing more than forty years later the South Carolina veteran could not recall the exact day that the war began for him, only that it was a “shocker, an event that will forever remain etched in my mind.” Storr’s first direct encounter with war was the day he could not buy Lucky Strike cigarettes. “Egad! It was one thing to put up with sugar rationing and no auto tires and pants with no cuffs. But *this* brought the conflict much too close to home,” he lamented, “It was like losing an old friend.”²⁴² The loss of America’s most popular cigarette was a heavy blow to consumers who had been buying them by the billions before the war.

Cigarette shortages were reported by many Americans to have taken a major toll on consumers for the duration of the war. In 1940, tobacco manufacturers produced enough for every American citizen to have four cigarettes daily. Three years later, so many cigarettes were being sent to troops overseas that one New York Times reporter warned Americans to prepare themselves for an average of two and two fifths cigarettes per day. “One can imagine what will happen then,” he wrote. A nation of cigarette smokers would be in a state of crisis and it would be common to see “well-dressed ladies and gentlemen...picking up butts in the street.”²⁴³ Many stores required customers to turn in empty cigarette packages before they could buy a new one to discourage hoarding. It was common for crowds to line up by the

²⁴²Bill Storr, "Its Color is Green, Its Label is MIA." *Spartanburg Herald-Journal*, May 16, 1985, sec. B, p. 1.

²⁴³"Cigarette Crisis." *The New York Times*, October 9, 1943, 12.

thousands for a chance to buy their favorite brands on the rare occasions when retailers could put them on their shelves. The New York Times even reported that thieves would take cigarettes from their victims, a much more valuable commodity than the contents of their wallets. Storr followed Lucky Strike overseas to war, enlisting shortly after he was unable to purchase them in the United States. “Obviously, the situation was critical,” he recalled, “if waging war required the presence of Lucky Strike... then every able-bodied man and boy, and a few girls, must also be needed.”²⁴⁴ But for the millions of Americans who remained at home for the duration of the war, the loss of their cigarettes was a crisis many were not prepared for.

Although the armed forces took billions of cigarettes off Americans shelves and sent them out of the country, Americans actually smoked much more during the war years than they ever had before. By the war’s end in 1945, per capita cigarette consumption increased by nearly a third to 2,027 smoked annually compared to just 1,551 just five years earlier.²⁴⁵ And although tobacco was declared “essential” to the war effort, it was never rationed by the federal government. Instead, President Roosevelt deferred tobacco farmers and factory workers from the draft and encouraged the industry to meet burgeoning demand.²⁴⁶ Cigarette production in the United States increased by nearly fifty percent, but domestic cigarette shortages were

²⁴⁴ Storr, 1.

²⁴⁵ This figure does not include cigarettes that were sent overseas to the US military and allies; the wartime surge in cigarette smoking was one of the quickest increases in the entire 20th century. Joseph C. Robert, *The Story of Tobacco in America*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), 269.

²⁴⁶ For a report of the agricultural and industrial conditions of the tobacco industry during the war, see Robert Sobel, *They Satisfy: The Cigarette in American Life*. (New York: Anchor Books, 1978), 128-131.

still caused by an insatiable consumer demand that outstripped the increases in production that were achieved.²⁴⁷

Overseas, government policy ensured cigarettes were always available to soldiers, opening a new market for manufacturers. Companies like American Tobacco rushed to capture a piece of this new business as they had during World War I, fully aware of the potential profits and exposure to new consumers. Military purchases of cigarettes were tax-exempt, meaning that manufacturers could cut prices and still make a handsome profit on American soldiers. Major firms also took advantage of federal policies and cheap military prices in order to encourage brand loyalty, hoping that soldiers would not forget what they smoked when they returned home after the war. Cigarettes became an indelible part of the soldiers experience overseas. They were included in ration packs and servicemen could always could on cheap (or oftentimes free) cigarettes to smoke or barter with. Military camps in France were even named after popular cigarette brands. Camp Lucky Strike, located in Northern France, ironically had a large hospital complex for soldiers and prisoners of war. By the war's end, military sales claimed about twenty five percent of total cigarette production in the United States.²⁴⁸

The vast majority of cigarettes the War Department bought were made up of just a few leading brands; soldiers insisted on having the same Lucky Strikes, Camels, and Chesterfields they had smoked at home. "There was little else in the daily grind," one historian wrote of popular brand cigarettes, "to remind [soldiers] of

²⁴⁷ Robert K. Heimann, *Tobacco and Americans*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1960), 242.

²⁴⁸ For a comprehensive account of federal and military policy regarding cigarette sales, see Chapter 8: Gone to War in Robert Sobel's *They Satisfy*.

home.”²⁴⁹ Without Lucky Strikes and other leading brands, civilians were sometimes left with off-brands and “war babies-” start up brands introduced during the war, both of which were sold at significantly lower prices.²⁵⁰ The cigarette crisis that Storr and millions of fellow Americans felt was caused more by themselves than by the war. Had Americans’ cigarette demand not risen so dramatically or if they had been content to smoke any brand, shortages would have been much less severe. Nonetheless, Americans always bought Lucky Strikes and other popular brands when they had the option, even if other brands were cheaper or easier to obtain.

The American Tobacco Company watched these changing smoking habits with a close eye and quickly realized that the war was changing how cigarettes were advertised and sold. The impact of war overseas and on the home front created a breakdown in the unity that had led ATC advertising policy since George Hill’s inauguration in 1926. With new consumption patterns, the ATC was given a new challenge- creating demand for a product that was hard or even impossible to find in stores. The unified advertising campaigns that had led Lucky Strike to the top of the cigarette market and through the Depression were confronted by new ideas on the best ways to advertise in wartime. As unity between print, radio, and other mediums of advertising unraveled, Lucky Strike ads began targeting Americans in fundamentally different ways. Conflicting messages and themes in advertising sent

²⁴⁹ Iain Gatley, *Tobacco: A Cultural History of how an Exotic Plant Seduced Civilization*. (New York: Grove Press, 2001), 260. As early as 1942, American soldiers reported that they were “tired” of foreign and off-brand cigarettes. According to Iain Gatley, “from the soldier’s point of view, cigarettes...formed an umbilical cord linking soldier to civilization.” See also “Want U.S. Cigarettes: Americans in Allied Armies Are Tired of English Kind.” *The New York Times*, December 21, 1942, p. 7.

²⁵⁰ “1,500 Wait on Line to Buy Cigarettes.” *The New York Times*, January 5, 1945, p. 17, Sobel 130.

consumers different messages about the war and the role that Lucky Strike was to play in it.

In the years leading up to American entry into World War II, George Hill watched from his Fifth Avenue office as sales of Lucky Strike were steadily surpassed by rival brands. Though sales of Luckies remained fairly stable in the late 1930s, Camel and Chesterfield sales rose steadily and were selling billions more units annually. Lucky Strike advertising had mellowed and lost the edge it had in the beginning of the decade, when sensational campaigns and new strategies had kept the brand far atop the sales charts. Nothing but first place in cigarette sales was good enough for Hill, and so in 1940 he finally turned to a new advertising strategy- industrial design. Changing the physical appearance of the Lucky Strike package could be the spark American Tobacco needed to jumpstart stagnant sales.

Over the decades, ATC officials and advertising men had cited Lucky Strike's package design as an impediment to sales. The package's jade green color clashed with women's clothing and male smokers thought it looked old fashioned compared to other brands.²⁵¹ Equally offensive to all potential consumers was the slight smell that the green ink gave off. In the early 1930s, Edward Bernays was one of the more vocal critics of the design, and suggested that the Lucky package be changed to a neutral color like white. Hill had been involved in the original Lucky Strike package design back in 1916, and had always resisted any changes to it. "That's lousy advice" he told Bernays, "I've spent millions of dollars advertising the package. Now you ask

²⁵¹ Sobel 132.

me to change it[?]"²⁵² If the color was going to be changed, Hill required a more compelling reason than aesthetics alone.

In Spring 1940, in the closing months of the New York World's Fair, Hill met with industrial designer Raymond Loewy to explore possible modifications to the Lucky Strike package. Loewy was well known for his streamlined redesigns of many products, from refrigerators to locomotives, and most recently for his official work designing buildings and exhibits at the World's Fair. He insisted that clean and simple designs made a product functionally and aesthetically appealing. "Between two products equal in quality, price, and function," he explained, "the one that is aesthetically correct is the one that sells."²⁵³ Though Hill never admitted that the Lucky Strike package was unappealing in any way, he still found himself in Loewy's office after hearing a rumor that the industrial designer did not like the current design. "My friend Albert Lasker tells me that you 'think'... you could design a better one" he quickly said after introducing himself, "I don't believe it. Besides, there is nothing wrong with the package." Understanding that Hill was still apprehensive about changing an icon that he had invested in so heavily, Loewy instead responded by betting the president \$50,000 that he could improve on the cigarette package. Hill considered this challenge to be reasonable and left Loewy to his work.²⁵⁴

²⁵² Instead of changing the Lucky Strike package color, Hill paid Bernays to attempt to change the color of American fashion to green, so that it would match with Lucky Strike. After an expensive public relations campaign in 1934, Bernays and Hill were only able to make green a popular color for about a year. Bernays, 389.

²⁵³ Raymond Loewy. "Selling Through Design." *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 90, no. 4604 (January 9, 1942): 94.

²⁵⁴ Executives who advised Hill on advertising matters found it a useful strategy to appeal to his ego and never directly confront the ATC president. By making Hill feel like he was still in charge new ideas that were not his own were still able to pass his judgment and become practice for the

One month later, Loewy finished his redesign and called Hill over to inspect the new Lucky Strike package. The new version was familiar looking yet displayed the Lucky Strike brand in important new ways. The manufacturing information was moved from the back and onto the sides. The trademark red target symbol that originally had only graced the front side was put on both the front and back. This rearrangement “liberated” the back of the package from technical information consumers were not interested in, and created a new space where the brand could be easily identified. Regardless of which side a package was laying on, it would now display the recognizable Lucky Strike name, literally doubling the advertising impact it had. The text on the package remained unchanged in the new design, though the font and size was altered slightly to give the package the “machine aesthetic” look that Loewy favored. Hill approved these two adjustments readily, but it was Loewy’s final suggestion- changing the color from green to white- that he bristled at. “A change in appearance of an accepted product thoroughly identifiable by the public is a risky thing,” Loewy admitted, “it must not destroy the identity of the package established at the cost of hundreds of millions of dollars.”²⁵⁵ Nevertheless, Hill relented and agreed that the package color could be changed, on the condition that the modifications take place gradually and not all at once. Progressive change would save Lucky Strike’s identity for loyal customers and attract new smokers to adopt the brand as well.²⁵⁶ However, Hill never specified when the changes would occur. He

company. Raymond Loewy, *Never Leave Well Enough Alone*. 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 145-146.

²⁵⁵ Loewy, *Never Leave Well Enough Alone*, 99.

²⁵⁶ Loewy, “Selling Through Design,” 99.

wanted an exciting advertising campaign to explain the bold new look of Lucky Strike. Two years later in 1942, the package was still green. Hill implemented all of Loewy's design changes, but was still holding back on changing the color. He was still waiting for the perfect campaign to introduce Lucky Strike white. Fortunately for American Tobacco, World War II was about to provide just the opportunity.

Shortly after the United States entered the war, supply shortages threatened to cripple American manufacturers just as much as they impaired the daily lives of consumers. While the loss of raw materials only created challenges for most businesses, the ATC instead turned a potential crisis into an advertising success that observers would later claim was one of the most successful campaigns of the entire war. According to company lore, the campaign began in 1942 when the War Resources Board put copper powder and chromium on its list of critical materials to the war effort. Without these, the ATC would be unable to make gold or green ink. Since the Lucky Strike package still had gold panels and a solid green background, the loss of these materials spelled certain doom for the iconic packaging. After a few months, company reserves of ink quickly dwindled and the head of Purchasing, Richard Boylan, was called up to the New York headquarters at 111 Fifth Avenue. When he arrived in Hill's office, he placed a folder with substitute labels at his desk. "Is this the best you can do?" Hill asked, disappointed that none of his green options were vibrant enough. But there was nothing to be done Boylan shrugged, "just like the soldiers, green ink has gone to war."²⁵⁷ As the story goes, Hill immediately slammed his hand on his desk, sensing the potential in such a comparison. By

²⁵⁷ This origin story of the "Lucky Strike Green has Gone to War" slogan is recorded in the ATC's congratulatory history *Sold American!: The First Fifty Years*.

wrapping color and design changes to the package up in the rhetoric of war and patriotic sacrifice, Lucky Strike could change its appearance without harming its image. Finally, George Hill was comfortable implementing the color changes that Raymond Loewy had proposed two years earlier.

Almost overnight, the Lucky Strike package was changed from its old jade green color to a cleaner and brighter white. Instead of attributing the change to industrial design or other commercial reasons, American Tobacco announced the alteration with the slogan “Lucky Strike Green Has Gone to War.” The phrase was first mentioned on Lucky Strike’s radio show *Information Please* in November 1942 in a series of teaser announcements that repeated the seven words without explanation throughout the broadcast.²⁵⁸ After public curiosity was piqued, the change was finally explained on Lucky Strike radio programs and in cigarette carton inserts. Just as American boys were donning military uniforms and marching to war, ads told audiences that “you will meet that same fine Lucky Strike tobacco in Luckies smart new uniform.”²⁵⁹

With their new war slogan, American Tobacco implied that the green ink used in their old packaging had been given up for the war effort, presumably for camouflage paint or dye for military clothing.²⁶⁰ By giving up green ink, industrial patriotism and consumer sacrifice were connected in a way that helped Americans stay loyal to the Lucky Strike brand despite shortages. Just like American soldiers

²⁵⁸ “Lucky Strikes to Be Clothed in New Wartime Dress,” *Advertising Age* 13, no. 46 (November 16, 1942): 30.

²⁵⁹ *Radio Continuity, Information Please*. Broadcast Script. Legacy Tobacco Documents Library. November 20, 1942, 1.

²⁶⁰ After the war, American Tobacco claimed that by switching color, they saved enough ink annually for the production of 400 light tanks. *Sold American*, 94.

would return home triumphantly after the war, Lucky Strike would be back one day too. In the meantime, with a less costly package design, the slogan offered consumers a way to personally support the war when they could choose Lucky Strike. If a smoker really wanted to “do their part,” there was no better option than Lucky Strike.

Throughout the war, it was common to see advertising that made American businesses out to be patriotic heroes. All of the major cigarette brands used war copy to advertise. But Camel and Chesterfield advertising only used war themes to portray their respective brands as the favorite of American troops, leaving the civilian consumer out of the picture.²⁶¹ Lucky Strike was the only cigarette that claimed to do more than just provide enjoyment for the boys overseas, it was actually helping them win the war by sacrificing its green ink.²⁶²

The “Lucky Strike Green” slogan was immediately attacked by the advertising industry as dishonest and self-promoting. “How Lucky Strike green has gone to war... we cannot possibly understand,” blasted the National Association of Ink Makers days after the color change, “there always has been and there still is, enough of the green in the bins of printing ink manufacturers and enough raw material to manufacture it, to supply the deep green formerly used on the Lucky Strike package.”²⁶³ Besides the validity of the claim, Lucky Strike was also criticized for

²⁶¹ Camel and Chesterfield ads published during the war typically featured smiling soldiers, sailors, pilots, or combat nurses. Camel claimed that “With men in the Army, Navy, Marines, and the Coast Guard, the favorite cigarette is Camel,” while a typical Chesterfield ad featured smiling actress Carole Landis in military uniform and her testimonial that “I saw thousands of cartons of cigarettes given to our boys overseas and can say without reservation Chesterfield is always a favorite.” “‘They’ve Got What it Takes!’ Camels advertisement” and “‘What Your Boy Wants Most...’ Chesterfield advertisement,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 1943-1944.

²⁶² Sobel, 132.

making such an act out to be a great patriotic sacrifice. It was wrong for American Tobacco to use war themes to make a profit when there were soldiers and civilians making real sacrifices for the war. One advertiser satirically wrote that “as soon as a pea canner runs out of peas he shouts ‘canned peas have gone to war!’” and that “as soon as an umbrella maker starts building parachutes he has us in Berlin.”²⁶⁴ But as much as Lucky Strike’s new campaign was deplored by advertisers and other manufacturers, it stood out among many war ads that saturated American society. “Lucky Strike Green Has Gone to War’s” powerful message hit even closer to home for many Americans a few weeks after its release when the United States invaded North Africa. A happy coincidence for the ATC, sales of Luckies immediately increased and would extend as the war continued.²⁶⁵

Before World War II, George Hill had stubbornly kept the Lucky Strike package green, despite objections from advertising, public relations, and industrial design experts. Despite a number of practical and convincing arguments, Hill’s personal preference for green took precedence. However, the war seemed to change all that in an instant. The promise of an advantageous change in Lucky Strike’s appearance without the risk of sacrificing years of previous advertising was too great and overrode Hill’s hesitations.

²⁶³ "Ink Makers Blast Luckies' 'Green is Off to War' Story," *Advertising Age* 13, no. 47 (November 23, 1942): 17. Emerson Foote, a Lord & Thomas advertiser on the American Tobacco account later admitted that “if it was not an outright lie, the claim [Lucky Strike Green has Gone to War] was surely overblown. It was pure Hill, done simply to attract attention, with possibly a shred of fact connected to it. But the agency liked it.” Emerson Foote quoted in Kluger, 117.

²⁶⁴ Raymond Rubicam. "Advertising." In *While You Were Gone: A Report on Wartime Life in the United States*, edited by Jack Goodman, New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1946, 431.

²⁶⁵ According to company records, the “Lucky Strike Green” campaign boosted sales by 38% in six weeks. The ATC sold 59.5 billion Lucky Strikes that year, 5 billion ahead of its closest competitor. *Sold American* 94.

Perhaps because of Hill's reluctance to change the color of the Lucky Strike package, it was not advertised uniformly across different advertising mediums. The "Lucky Strike Green has Gone to War" slogan was used extensively on the radio and matched with the increasingly war-conscious programs Lucky Strike sponsored. Print advertising was another matter. Aside from paper inserts in Lucky Strike cartons and store displays, the ATC did not print any new ads with the war slogan or any explanation for the color change at all. Newspaper and magazine ads featuring tobacco workers continued to run without any interruptions or references to the war themes present in radio. The ATC would never have kept certain themes in some ads not others before the war when intertextualized ad campaigns dominated their advertising strategy but as American involvement in the war intensified, Lucky Strike radio ads became increasingly politicized and thematically separate from print.²⁶⁶

In late 1942, George Hill received a surprise visit from Kay Kyser in his New York office. Hill had made Lucky Strike the exclusive sponsor of *Kay Kyser's Kollege of Musical Knowledge* in 1939 and was now insisting every broadcast include the "Lucky Strike Green has Gone to War" slogan. Kyser felt that the slogan gave the ATC more credit for supporting the war effort than it deserved and requested that Hill take it off the air. Despite his pleas, he could not put a dent in Hill. Holding up a newspaper article covering the recent surge in Lucky Strike sales, Hill believed that

²⁶⁶ Gerd Horton has argued that during World War II, radio programming became more political and conscious of the war for reasons of patriotism and self-interest. Radios were almost universal during the war- over 90% of American families owned one. These Americans viewed radio as a sort of public servant that was a trusted "provider of news and information" during the war. One radio executive later said that "when [radio shows] use war themes and use them well, their Crossleys go up." The pressure from the federal government to inject war rhetoric and propaganda into radio programming was also intense. To avoid a federal takeover of radio programming and to protect radio staff and stars from the draft, radio shows tried to make themselves appear essential to the war effort. Gerd Horton, *Radio Goes to War: The Cultural Politics of Propaganda During World War II*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 2, 129.

war advertising centered on sacrifice and service to the nation worked, regardless of how honest it actually was. Kyser left that day unable to remove the slogan. He returned several months later, but this time with a different proposal for the ATC.

Kyser was very patriotic and wanted to make a genuine impact on the war, something more real than the green ink the ATC claimed was going to war. Instead of broadcasting *The Kollege of Musical Knowledge* from the NBC studios in Los Angeles, Kyser asked if the next show could be aired from a Marine Base in San Diego. He thought that having live entertainment for the troops would help improve morale at the base. Although recording a show at the base would cost American Tobacco an extra six thousand dollars, Hill readily approved the request; he saw yet another opportunity to leverage the war to advertise Lucky Strike.²⁶⁷ Kyser's band was met by a crowd of cheering Marines, who filled the camp auditorium to capacity for the show. The military was so impressed with the turnout that they immediately asked if every Kyser show could be broadcast from an Army, Navy, or Marine base. "Probably no other show people could have carried off this sort of stunt with quite the genuine, good-fellow touch of Kay," one attendee wrote afterwards.²⁶⁸ Pleased with the results, American Tobacco was more than happy to let Kyser continue.

Kyser was the first of many radio stars who took their shows to military bases and other service camps around the country. After hearing the broadcast of *The Kollege of Musical Knowledge*, Bob Hope's producer suggested that the comedian take his act to the troops as well. By 1943, hundreds of stars were performing for the

²⁶⁷ Raymond D. Hair and Jürgen Wölfer, *Thinking of You: The Story of Kay Kyser*. (Albany, GA: BearManor Media, 2011), 161.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 162.

troops on the home front and overseas on the front lines. The service that these men and women provided was sincerely done in the name of winning the war, but it was no secret in the industry that doing this “patriotic duty” also had commercial benefits as well. Broadcasts from service facilities gave performers a higher profile, increased ratings of their shows, and tied the sponsor to the war effort in a positive way.²⁶⁹ After the San Diego show, Hill allowed Kyser to perform exclusively at military camps from then on. At the war’s end Kyser had performed in over three hundred camps well over one thousand times, far more than anyone else in the country. “I intend to go on doing everything I can,” Kyser said of his camp performances, “to entertain the boys in service and help the war effort.” The bandleader’s genuine patriotism was the perfect foil to the “Lucky Strike Green” slogan and its profit motive. Observing similar celebrity performances later in the war, sociologist Robert Merton noted that the majority of listeners honestly believed in the performer’s sincere desire to aid the war effort. That listeners reacted in this way to Kyser and other stars was surprising he noted, given “the disenchantment of our informants with the world of advertising, commercials and propaganda.”²⁷⁰

Lucky Strike continued to sponsor *The Kollege of Musical Knowledge* until late 1944, when George Hill decided to pick up *The Jack Benny Program* instead. Jack Benny was the most popular comedian of his day and his show was significantly more popular than Kyser’s.²⁷¹ Benny was known for appearing at the Hollywood

²⁶⁹ Horton, 103.

²⁷⁰ Robert K. Merton, *Mass Persuasion: The Social Psychology of a War Bond Drive*. (New York: Harper & Brother Publishers, 1946), 82-87.

Canteen, the servicemen's entertainment club run by celebrities, and broadcast his show there multiple times.²⁷² Though commercials had been integrated into the other shows sponsored by Lucky Strike in the past, Benny incorporated them into his comedic routine. Poking fun at other Lucky Strike radio programs, Lucky Strike cigarettes, and even George Hill himself, Benny made the advertisement a substantial part of the show. This helped keep the audience's attention on Lucky Strike for the entire broadcast.²⁷³ Shortly after signing with Lucky Strike, Benny assured Hill that he would use his show to sell Luckies using associations with the war effort, integrated commercials, and the rest of his best tricks. Hill replied that he had picked up the show for that very reason: "Boy, I am a salesman enough to know that it's the year's record that counts...But I don't have to wait this time for the year's record...to convince me that you are going to sell the goods."²⁷⁴

Lucky Strike radio advertising depicted the war as a serious conflict that required the sacrifice and support of industry and civilian alike; it was a war in which ordinary Americans were intimately involved. Kyser made a point of performing for enlisted men and not officers, and liked to eat with the men in mess halls and talk with them before shows. One of his favorite stories to tell soldiers was about a

²⁷¹ *The Jack Benny Program* consistently received an average Hooper between 25 and 30 in the early 1940s, while *The Kollege of Musical Knowledge* was typically five points behind. Summers, 20, 25.

²⁷² Benny was so well linked with the Hollywood Canteen that he was featured in the Warner Brother's film *Hollywood Canteen* by name and performed a humorous musical number.

²⁷³ Keeping the audience's attention during commercials was notoriously difficult, especially at the beginning and end of a broadcast when listeners often missed advertising messages. Shows that were recorded and sent overseas to American troops intentionally skipped the advertising-laden opening and closing minutes of broadcasts, making Benny's skill even more useful to ATC efforts to make sure that soldiers stayed loyal to Lucky Strike. Horton, 105. For an example of a Lucky Strike advertisement integrated into the comedic dialogue of *The Jack Benny Program*, see *Radio Continuity, The Jack Benny Program*. Broadcast Script. Legacy Tobacco Documents Library. October 1, 1944.

²⁷⁴ Correspondence between Jack Benny and George Hill, quoted in Horton, 103.

general in one camp who issued an order that no officers were to attend the *Kollege of Musical Knowledge*. Any officer caught doing so would be immediately demoted and serve with the regular troops.²⁷⁵ Kyser made sure that the listening audience back home also knew he was performing for regular Americans and not for any other group of listeners. Members of the audience were frequently called on stage to answer questions written in by fans across the country. Questions were typically about songs, actors, films, and other popular culture topics familiar to a national listening audience.²⁷⁶ In a letter to George Hill, one listener exclaimed that when Kyser incorporated popular culture and war themes in the same program, “you bring me right into your program.”²⁷⁷ When Lucky Strike radio advertising was broadcast into the living rooms of America, it also brought reminders of the war and its impact on ordinary Americans. If the ATC followed the same advertising strategies as it did a decade earlier, then all Lucky Strike ads should have also contained “realistic” war imagery. However, American Tobacco put a radically different kind of message in their printed advertising. It seemed that the ATC’s ideas about Lucky Strike and a unified consumer audience were beginning to change.

If Americans had only looked at print advertisements for Lucky Strike in the 1940s, they would scarcely been able to tell there was a war going on. In newspapers and magazines, the only acknowledgement of conflict was a small logo for war bonds

²⁷⁵ Hair and Wölfer, 265.

²⁷⁶ In one 1943 program, contestants were asked to identify several songs from their melodies, to name two celebrities with the last name “Jones,” and who was the star of *Captain January* (Shirley Temple). *Radio Continuity, Kay Kyser’s Kollege of Musical Knowledge*. Broadcast Script. Tobacco Documents Online. January 6, 1943.

²⁷⁷ Eugene I. Harrington to George Washington Hill, November 29, 1943, Legacy Tobacco Documents Library.

on the corner of the page. Instead, these ads revolved around idealized versions of rural tobacco country. The ATC commissioned Thomas Hart Benton and others from the Associated American Artists to paint romantic scenes of farmers out in fields filled with tobacco, or auctioneers in warehouses bursting at the seams with large tobacco leaves. Labeling these farmers and auctioneers as experts, each advertisement used their authority to claim that Lucky Strike cigarettes were made from the finest tobacco the ATC could acquire. Hill would say “I know the great preference for Lucky Strike is a fact... ‘two-to-one’ is one of the great, confident expressions in our language. It is rarely argued with.”²⁷⁸ Before long, newspapers and magazines began displaying paintings of farmers along with Hill’s new slogan: “With men who know tobacco best, it’s Luckies two to one.”

Later in 1942, Hill developed what was to be his last great slogan of his career. Repeating the theme of quality ingredients in every cigarette, the new phrase short and simple: “Lucky Strike Means Fine Tobacco.” In 1943, the words were paired with a painting of a white overalled farmer in his field holding a big golden tobacco leaf. That year the Advertising Research Foundation named the ad to be one of the most memorable of year.²⁷⁹ By 1944, the slogan had become so familiar to Americans that it was shortened to “L.S. /M.F.T.,” and was printed on the bottom of every package of cigarettes.

²⁷⁸ Fairfax M. Cone, *With All Its Faults: A Candid Account of Forty Years in Advertising*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969,) 114.

²⁷⁹ In their report, the Advertising Research Foundation noted that well over 60% of consumers they surveyed remembered the “Golden Leaf” ad positively. “10 outstanding newspaper advertisements of 1943.” *Printer's Ink* (December 31, 1943): 75.

The artwork that was used in the “tobacco expert” advertisements was engineered by George Hill and others at American Tobacco to create an idyllic view of the tobacco industry and consumer access to cigarettes during wartime. “We don’t want realism that will foul up our sales,” one of Hill’s assistants maintained and portraying racial diversity or the realities of cigarette manufacturing and availability of consumer goods in wartime was unacceptable.²⁸⁰

In his memoirs, Thomas Hart Benton remembered the frustration he felt as the ATC manipulated his artwork from a realistic depiction of black tobacco farmers into an image that excluded non-whites and would be unrecognizable anywhere in the United States. After being commissioned by the ATC to paint a “realistic picture of the tobacco industry,” Benton traveled to southern Georgia where he filled a book with sketches of farmers out in their fields cultivating and harvesting leaves. Confident that his patrons would be pleased, he returned to Hill’s office where he was shocked to learn that he did not have a single sketch the ATC approved. “You ought to know,” he was told by ad men “that you cannot picture Negroes doing what looks like old-time slave work when you are advertising tobacco.” Benton stood dumbfounded as they continued: “The Negro institutions would boycott our products...if we showed pictures of this sort.” And if Lucky Strike ads contained well-dressed, respectable looking blacks, “of course, the whole of the white South would boycott us. So the only thing to do is to avoid the representation of Negroes entirely.”

²⁸⁰ Thomas Hart Benton, *An Artist in America*. 3rd ed. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1968,) 294.

Still bewildered but determined to please American Tobacco, Benton traveled to North Carolina, where tobacco was handled mostly by white workers. Here, he thought, he could paint a picture of tobacco that was both realistic and acceptable to advertisers. The artist found an old farmer out in the hill country and sketched him and his granddaughter sorting tobacco leaves. Upon returning to New York City for the second time, he learned that this picture too was unacceptable. The granddaughter was not pretty enough for a Lucky Strike ad. Chalking the disapproval up to his own artistic style, Benton used a friend's daughter as a model and quickly drafted up a new picture. Yet again, he was dismayed to hear while Hill liked the work personally; it was not suitable for public display. The girl appeared too thin, and Benton was informed that this might suggest that "proximity to tobacco caused consumption." "Everything about tobacco must look healthy," Hill insisted. After taking the girl out entirely, Benton was rejected again because the tobacco leaves were not large or yellow enough. This did not match the "fine tobacco" slogan that would be in the advertisements. Benton eventually did finish his painting, "The Curing Barn," in a way that met with ATC approval, but it hardly resembled any of the locations he actually visited in tobacco country.²⁸¹

Benton's experience with American Tobacco was not unique. Similar efforts to create "realistic" portrayals of cigarette manufacture at the 1939 New York World's Fair had also resulted in a vision of American society that completely ignored racial and ethnic diversity. Like the all-white cast of smiling workers in the

²⁸¹ Benton's recollection of his work for American Tobacco, which he called "a memorable example of...toughness" can be found in his autobiography. Benton, 294-296.

Lucky Strike Fair Exhibit, Benton and other artists were forced to omit people of color in order to depict a happy and racially-harmonious society.²⁸²

All of the paintings created for American Tobacco by Benton and his colleagues were deliberately rooted in a “folkish vision of preindustrial abundance.”²⁸³ This trend, according Jackson Lears, emerged in the 1930s as advertisers sought to bolster consumer morale among white Americans. Reassuring iconography of the “traditional” American way of life that harkened back to a largely legendary time when there were no shortages of goods or tough sacrifices to be made for the war effort. In their attempts to comfort consumers with images of harmony and plenty, American Tobacco ignored racial diversity, labor unrest, consumer shortages, and other disruptions that were omnipresent in the war era. Though more Lucky Strikes were being made and sold than ever before, ordinary American consumers did not have access to them as the plentiful farms in the ads promised. Unlike the Lucky Strike radio programs from this era, print advertisements did not reflect any of the realities of war on the home front that millions of Americans actually encountered.

Of all the impacts that World War II had upon the American Tobacco Company, the rift in advertising policies was among the most visible. Campaigns on the radio that were carried out by Kay Kyser, Jack Benny, and other performers did as much supporting the troops as they did Lucky Strike. They recognized that the war

²⁸² Mythification and omission were devices also frequently used by the film industry at the time to code blacks as invisible or inferior to white American society. See Snead, 4-6.

²⁸³ Lears, 124.

was having a dramatic impact on ordinary people, and made that clear to listeners time and time again. Just as war bond drives were more than simple means for financing the war, the “Lucky Strike Green” campaign and shows broadcast from service camps served as constant reminders that the war was a very real thing despite being a world away.²⁸⁴ Alternately, Lucky Strike print advertisements hardly admitted that any conflict existed and did not acknowledge its effect on Americans in any realistic manner.²⁸⁵ Working with entertainers, artists, designers, and many other advertising men, George Hill allowed different Lucky Strike campaigns to depict American society and life in radically different ways, and by extension, target separate groups of consumers.

As war disrupted the lives of businesses and consumers alike, American Tobacco realized that the mass audience they had taken for granted had never actually existed at all. Before World War II Lucky Strike advertising was based on the idea that there was an interclass audience in the United States, and that the best way to persuade them to buy products was with unified advertising messages. Though this assumption was abandoned by the middle of World War II, it did not prevent the ATC from successfully selling billions of cigarettes in the 1920s and 1930s. During the war, however, American Tobacco decided to focus radio advertising on the war

²⁸⁴ Kenneth P. O’Brien and Lynn H. Parsons, “Introduction.” In *The Home-Front War: World War II and American Society*, edited by K. P. O’Brien and L. H. Parsons, (London: Greenwood Press, 1995), 3.

²⁸⁵ According to Robert Sobel, if a viewer really looked into an ad, L.S./M.F.T sounded like a military Morse code signal and the phrase “So Round, So Firm, So Fully Packed. So Free and Easy on the Draw” used to describe the cigarette “had vague sexual connotations geared at drawing nudges from the sailors and soldiers, with implications that a Lucky might do when women were not available.” Sobel, 132.

and the sacrifices it required, and print advertising on themes of overflowing abundance and omissions of diversity. Using dissimilar themes to advertise Lucky Strike would never have happened a decade before. Yet domestic sales of Lucky Strikes continued to skyrocket despite pervasive wartime shortages. It was in this moment that the company realized that society was made up of diverse audiences that responded positively to diversified advertising campaigns.

The ATC was not alone in uncovering the myth of the “one, big audience.” In 1943 sociologists Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton empirically demonstrated that film, radio, and reading audiences had always been made up of dissimilar groups. Social and cultural divisions in American society would cause viewers (and consumers) to view a message in different ways. The same idea applied to Lucky Strike customers. “The writer,” they observed, “must address his propaganda to a psychologically heterogeneous audience, i.e. the members of which are in different states of mind on the given issue. Materials which are effective for one segment of the audience may produce opposite effects among another.”²⁸⁶ Americans were as diverse as Earl Robinson’s 1939 “Ballad for Americans” had suggested and American Tobacco was seeing the benefits that came with this new vision of consumer society.

During World War II many observers adopted the diverse society concept that Lazarsfeld and Merton had “discovered” in 1943.²⁸⁷ In 1946 Lazarsfeld wrote that “the radio industry has become aware of how widely varied is the composition of

²⁸⁶ Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton, “Studies in Radio and Film Propaganda.” *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences* 6, no. 2 (December 1943): 69.

²⁸⁷ Writing close to twenty years later, critic Dwight MacDonal called this the “recent discovery—since 1945—that there is not One Big Audience but rather a number of smaller, more specialized audiences that may still be commercially profitable.” Dwight MacDonal, *Masscult & Midcult*. (New York,: Partisan Review, 1961), 76.

listeners for different programs.”²⁸⁸ The Hollywood community experienced similar doubts about an interclass audience in the last years of the war.²⁸⁹ People who heard and saw Lucky Strike advertising were the same. While one viewer may have found the idealized rural scenes of tobacco farmers reassuring and positive, others may have rejected these advertisements because they could not relate. Radio ads, which recognized the war and its considerable impact on ordinary Americans, were more appealing to consumers like Bill Storr, who connected the “Lucky Strike Green has Gone to War” theme with his own personal war experiences for the rest of his life.

When all was said and done at the end of World War II, the fragmentation and collapse of unity within Lucky Strike advertising was not a negative change for the American Tobacco Company. Instead of creating disunity that alienated smokers and harmed sales, this shift in advertising diversified its appeal among heterogeneous audiences. The war freed the ATC from their belief in a “great mass audience” that caused campaigns to ignore minorities other groups, which made up a significant portion of American society. By beginning to recognize diversity among consumer groups, the ATC was able to maintain consumer loyalty to the brand and attract new smokers too.

²⁸⁸ Paul Lazarsfeld, *The People Look at Radio*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946), 39.

²⁸⁹ Saverio Giovacchini, *Hollywood Modernism: Film and Politics in the Age of the New Deal*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 166-171.

Conclusion

When World War II began the American Tobacco Company had been quick to send Lucky Strike away to war. Americans were left with empty shelves and reminders on the radio that their cigarettes were overseas helping soldiers protect the American way of life. When the war ended, consumers suddenly were able to buy as many Luckies as they wanted again. After enduring shortages and rations for more years than they cared to remember, Lucky Strike's return must have been a welcome sight to many. But part of the brand remained at war too. As part of the Marshall Plan, millions of Lucky Strikes and other cigarettes were sent to Europe to aid in reconstruction of the ravaged continent. In the months after the war, cigarettes became legitimate currency in most of Europe. Soldiers and civilians alike could use their Luckies to buy anything from a room for the night to cameras and other expensive items.²⁹⁰ Other wartime changes ultimately became permanent; Lucky Strike's new white label was the most obvious example. Lucky Strike Green had gone to war never to return. Some returning veterans grumbled when they could not find the old colored package they remembered, but overall sales continued to rise in the post-war years.²⁹¹

The changes that Lucky Strike advertising strategy underwent during the war also remained after 1945, and continued to transform after George Hill's death the following year. The man who had pioneered so many new advertising techniques in

²⁹⁰ A GI in Europe could buy a meal anywhere for about ten cigarettes, while pricier items like cameras went for two to three cigarette cartons. One visitor in Germany commented that "the American cigarette, which has intrinsic value and is therefore more stable, is the noisiest coin of the realm today." Bella Spewack, quoted in Sobel, 146.

²⁹¹ Nearly forty years after he returned from World War II, Bill Storr still lamented that "nobody has ever satisfactorily explained what really happened to Lucky Strike Green." Storr, "The Color is Green, its Label is MIA."

his fanatical quest to sell Lucky Strikes was felled by a heart attack at the age of 61, likely caused by his habit of smoking four packs of Luckies a day. Though Hill was alive during the war to see the first signs of change in ATC advertising, he would hardly have believed what was to come in the next decade. By 1948, it seemed that many of Hill's former employees could not either. American Tobacco eliminated claims that Lucky Strike has fewer irritants than rival brands, which Hill had introduced to ads in 1927. In protest, Foote, Cone, & Belding (Lord & Thomas changed its name after Albert Lasker retired from the agency) resigned the Lucky Strike advertising account as did Hill's own son George Hill Jr., a vice-president of advertising.²⁹² By the end of the decade the company's advertising department scarcely resembled its former self. As American Tobacco fought to stay atop the cigarette industry, newly empowered advertising executives also continued to move away from the "single mass-audience" model of advertising that they had pursued before the war, and towards a more inclusive strategy that recognized consumer diversity.

In May 1948, the popular African-American magazine *Ebony* published an article on a new type of advertiser that had arisen in the mid-1940s: the "brown huckster." As corporations began to look for new consumer groups to make up for markets lost in war-ravaged Europe, they "heard the jingle of coin among the nation's newest selling frontier- the undeveloped market of 14 million Negroes with pockets full of boomtime wages."²⁹³ During and after the war, the movement of blacks out of

²⁹² "Am. Tobacco Billings Seen Hinging on April 7 Meet." *The Billboard*, April 3, 1948. 6.

²⁹³ "The Brown Hucksters: Army of 40 marketing men make Negro buyers more brand-conscious." *Ebony*, May 1948. 28.

the isolated South and into better jobs in urban areas was also attracting the attention of advertisers. Black America, a consumer group that American Tobacco's advertising had long ignored and excluded from its vision of modernity, was no longer seen as peripheral or irrelevant.²⁹⁴ By early 1948 Camel, Chesterfield, and many other cigarette brands were hiring black hucksters (salesmen) and advertising in the black press. "Virtually every major cigarette, except Lucky Strike, has run copy in negro newspapers," *Ebony* continued, challenging American Tobacco to reach out to their black consumers.²⁹⁵ Phillip Morris was the first cigarette brand to advertise in *Ebony* at the start of the decade, and by 1948 Lucky Strike was the only brand that had not followed their example.²⁹⁶ Later that year, Lucky Strike responded with new ads in *Ebony*, the first of many ATC ad campaigns to directly target black consumers.

The first advertisement the ATC published in *Ebony* read "First in Negro History...First in Cigarette History." Juxtaposing an image of Booker T. Washington with the claim that more men in the tobacco industry smoked Lucky Strike than any other brand, the ATC made it clear that African Americans could be a part of modern American society as long as they smoked Luckies.²⁹⁷ More ads in the series soon

²⁹⁴ Robert E. Weems Jr., *Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century*. (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 32-34. Similarly, Stephanie Capparell has written an excellent account of how Pepsi-Cola used diversified advertising to great effect in African American communities in the 1940s and 1950s in her book *The Real Pepsi Challenge*.

²⁹⁵ "Brown Hucksters," 31.

²⁹⁶ In 1953, the Pittsburgh Courier wrote that "Phillip Morris was the first cigarette to advertise in the Negro Press, and this, coupled with the Negro sales force, has made its impact on at that time an indifferently exploited market." George F. Brown, "Phillip Morris' Human Relations Program Sets Pace for Industry." Pittsburgh Courier Magazine Section, October 17, 1953.

²⁹⁷ Ironically, Washington had spoken out against tobacco use frequently before his death in 1915, and thought that it contributed to moral corruption and idleness.

followed featuring scientist George Washington Carver, athlete Jesse Owens, and other “modern Negro notables.” The “Famous Firsts” series was “designed to show the Negro that his race has accomplished many things” and used many of the same advertising strategies that Hill had used in the late 1920s and early 1930s to entice new smokers.²⁹⁸ Like the “Precious Voice” campaign of 1927, there were appeals to scientific and celebrity authority. “Famous Firsts” also associated Lucky Strike with African Americans who were labeled as members of modern society similar to other campaigns from the previous decade. For months, these ads were run exclusively in national and local African American newspapers and magazines.²⁹⁹

The following year, new ads ran in *Ebony* with African Americans making Lucky Strike a part of their youthful, active lives. Smiling African Americans playing golf and tennis or tobogganing through the snow invited readers to join them in the healthy lifestyles that modern American society enjoyed. The inclusion of leisure activities in these ads shows how American Tobacco was finally recognizing that African Americans had ample discretionary income and trying to attract their consumer dollars.³⁰⁰ That same year, other Lucky Strike ads were published in national magazines focused more on female smoking than on race or leisure activities. White women appeared smoking Luckies and were framed by colorful

²⁹⁸ “When advertising and sales are coordinated, you get results.” *Printer’s Ink*, November 26, 1948, 68.

²⁹⁹ “Lucky Strike 1948 Negro Newspaper Advertising,” Legacy Tobacco Documents Library, 1948.

³⁰⁰ Before 1940, most white advertisers virtually ignored African American consumers unless they were selling skin whiteners, hair straighteners, or other cosmetic products. When advertisers did advertise in African American newspapers, they often used ads that featured whites and refused to tailor ads to black consumers. For more see Chapter 2 of *Desegregating the Dollar*.

tobacco leaves.³⁰¹ There were few similarities between ad campaigns targeting white smokers and those targeting black smokers other than the image of the Lucky Strike package and the ever-present “L.S.M.F.T.” slogan.

In the 1950s and 1960s, American Tobacco continued to tailor part of their advertising to the African American market. Lucky Strike ads were similar to other cigarette brands and often published endorsements from African American celebrities and role models in *Ebony*, particularly athletes. Testimonials from Jesse Owens, Roy Campanella, and 1952 Rookie of the Year Joe Black were common in periodicals that had a wide African American readership. Lucky Strike ads in *Life* and other magazines with more white readers, on the other hand, used athlete endorsements much less frequently in the post war years.³⁰² Although Lucky Strike was never known as an African American cigarette, it remained the second most popular brand behind Camel throughout the 1950s and early 1960s.³⁰³

Like many of the other advertising strategies that American Tobacco adopted during the George Hill years, targeting African Americans with tailored

³⁰¹ Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising, "First Again With Tobacco Men!, 1948."

³⁰² By the late 1950s, there were five times as many athlete endorsements in cigarette ads in *Ebony* than there were in *Life*. Richard W. Pollay, Jung S. Lee, and David Carter-Whitney, "Separate, but Not Equal: Racial Segmentation in Cigarette Advertising." *Journal of Advertising* 21, no. 1 (March 1992): 51. Also see Valerie B. Yerger, and R. E. Malone's "African American Leadership Groups: Smoking with the Enemy."

³⁰³ A 1953 survey of cigarette brands described Lucky Strike's marketing profile as "proportionately greater strength among men, younger smokers, middle and lower classes, students and smokers in the southern part of the country. By size of market, the pattern is fairly uniform with the exception of large metropolitan areas of 1,000,000 population and over. The brand is relatively weak here" In comparison, the Camel and Phillip Morris brand descriptions specifically listed "negroes" as a significant part of their profiles. The report also noted that 36% of African American smokers preferred Camel while 16% preferred Lucky Strike. "National Consumer Study of Cigarette Smoking Habits, Summer 1953 by Sullivan, Stauffer, Colwell & Bayles, Inc.," Legacy Tobacco Documents Library. 1953. 25-26, 44.

advertisements was a decision motivated by profit. In *Desegregating the Dollar*, historian Robert Weems Jr. has argued that increased post-war incomes and the rise of professional advocates for African American access to goods drastically transformed their status as consumers. Instead of reducing African Americans to stereotypes or omitting them completely from advertising, economic pressure forced corporations to concede to African American consumer needs. The ATC's 1948 and 1949 advertisements in *Ebony* recognized these changes and were an attempt to compete with rival brands that had been quicker to target African Americans.³⁰⁴

Although Hill was not at the helm of the ATC in the 1950s, his legacy still remained in Lucky Strike advertising. His last great slogan: "Lucky Strike Means Fine Tobacco" was printed on every pack of cigarettes for years after his death and is still the brand's slogan today. ATC advertising continued to spread out and explore new mediums in order to reach more potential consumers. Hill's greatest radio program, *Your Hit Parade*, remained popular with viewers and transitioned to television until the show was taken off the air in 1959. As medical research and investigations began to reveal the health risks associated with smoking to the public, American Tobacco was among tobacco's greatest defenders. George Hill would have approved of the company's decision to publish "A Frank Statement to Cigarette Smokers," a 1954 advertisement that used the testimonial of medical authorities to dispute reports that smoking caused cancer and other terminal diseases. And though he never approved any ads with positive depictions of African Americans during his

³⁰⁴ Chesterfield and Camel entered the African American market in the mid 1940s, years before Lucky Strike.

lifetime, Hill would have agreed that a strategy that increased the number of potential customers was always good for Lucky Strike.

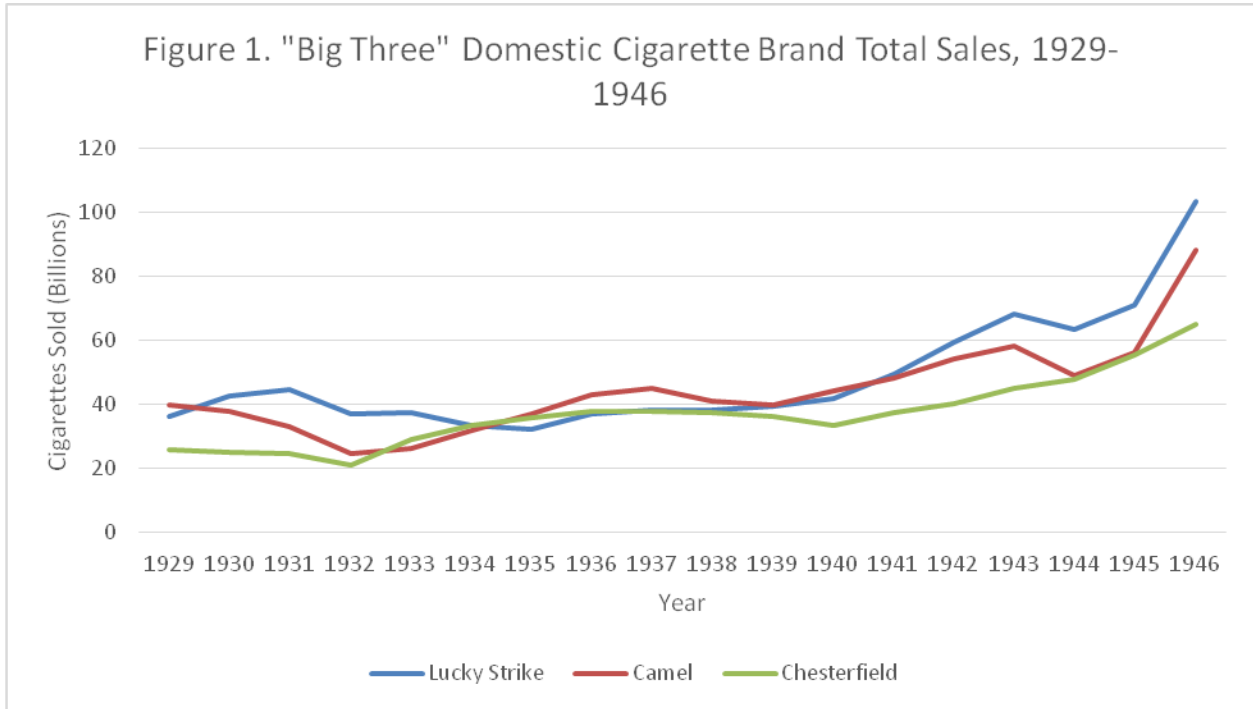
The post-Hill years continued to move the ATC away from a dogmatic belief in a unified audience. This was due in large part to the improved economic standing and visibility of different consumer groups. In the mid 1940s African Americans spent over ten billion dollars on consumer goods, over three times as much as they had twenty years earlier. Over one hundred million of those dollars were being spent on cigarettes.³⁰⁵ It was difficult for American Tobacco not to notice the profits to be made from the consumers their advertising had ignored for so long. But the decision to advertise to African Americans was also made possible by the company's changing ideas about American society. Lucky Strike's sales success during World War II had proven that advertising could undergo sweeping changes and still maintain brand loyalty and the disintegration of the unified mass audience concept during the war opened the door for the ATC's African American campaigns in the following years. George Hill may not have believed in racial equality or a consumer's right to see themselves reflected in advertising, but he did believe in using advertising to sell as many Lucky Strikes as possible. And introducing the appearance of diversity in advertising did just that.

Looking back, Lucky Strike advertising was part of the wider American cultural context between the late 1920s and the 1950s. The changes that Lucky Strike advertising went through during the Hill presidency were consistent with other cultural industries in the United States. American Tobacco assumed there was one "great big audience" like the film and radio industries did in the prewar era. And

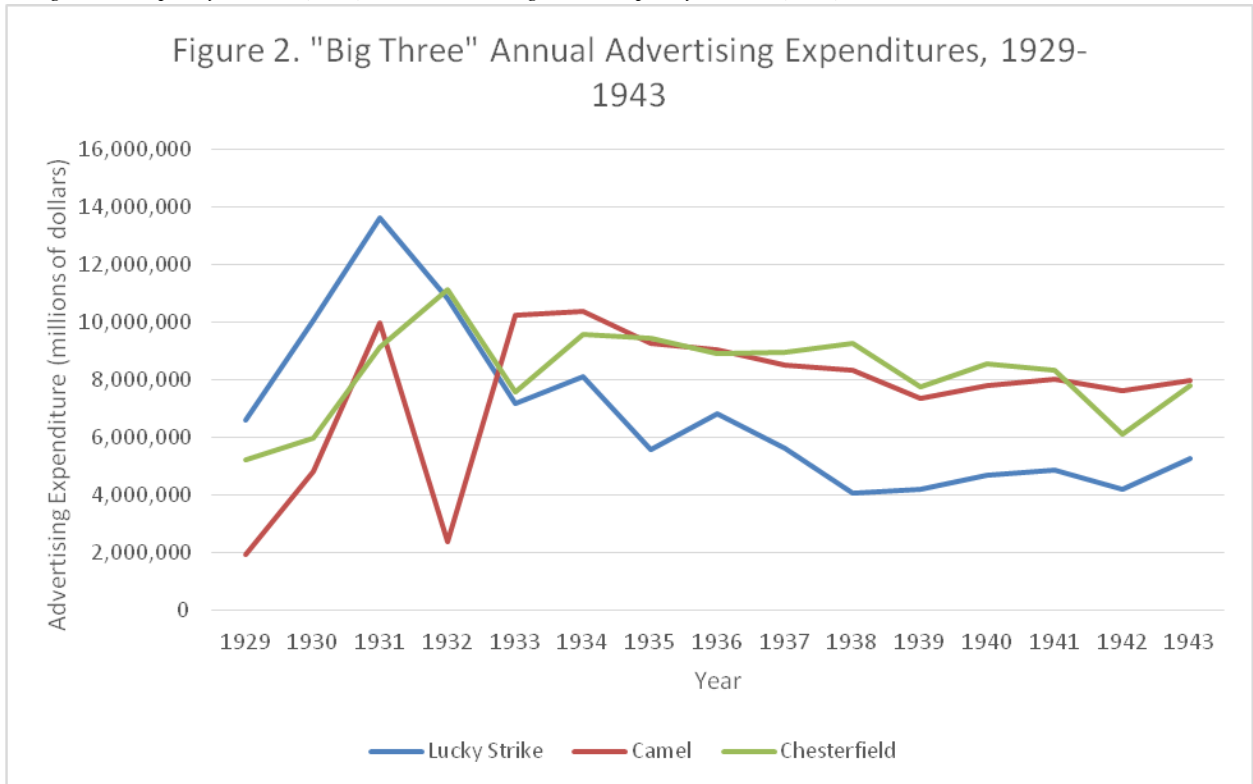
³⁰⁵ Weems, 34.

during World War II, Lucky Strike ads began to recognize diversity in consumer groups at the same time that films and radio programs did. Lucky Strike followed popular cultural trends closely in the post-war era as well; it discovered *Ebony* magazine at the same time that Hollywood discovered Sidney Poitier and began giving him serious acting roles. At its core, Lucky Strike advertising was strictly commercial; George Hill would not stand for anything less. But it is also in sync with what historians know about popular culture in this period and should be understood as a significant piece of the American cultural horizon.

Appendix

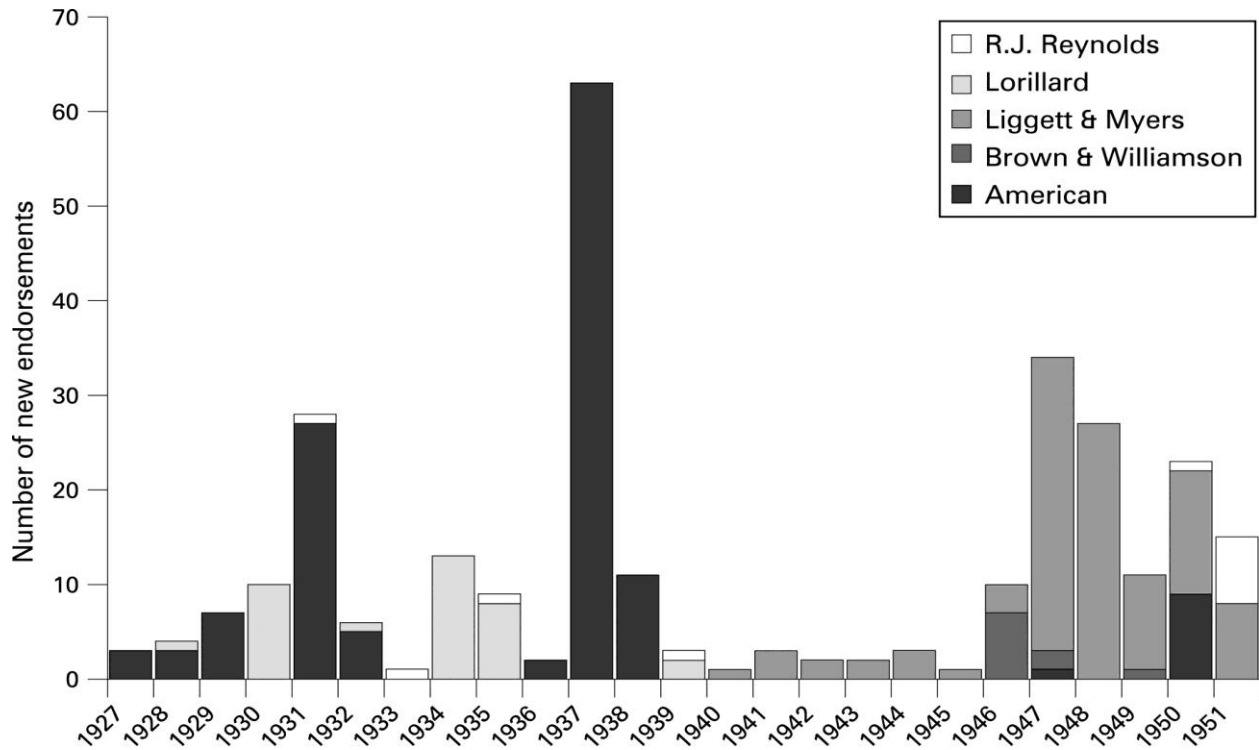


Sales figures compiled from Neil Borden's *The Economic Effects of Advertising* (1947), The American Tobacco Company's *Domestic Sales and Advertising Expenditures of the Three Leading Brands of Cigarettes* (1944), and Printer's Ink's *Tax-Paid Cigarette Output by Brands* (1945) and *Tax Paid Cigarette Output by Brands* (1946).



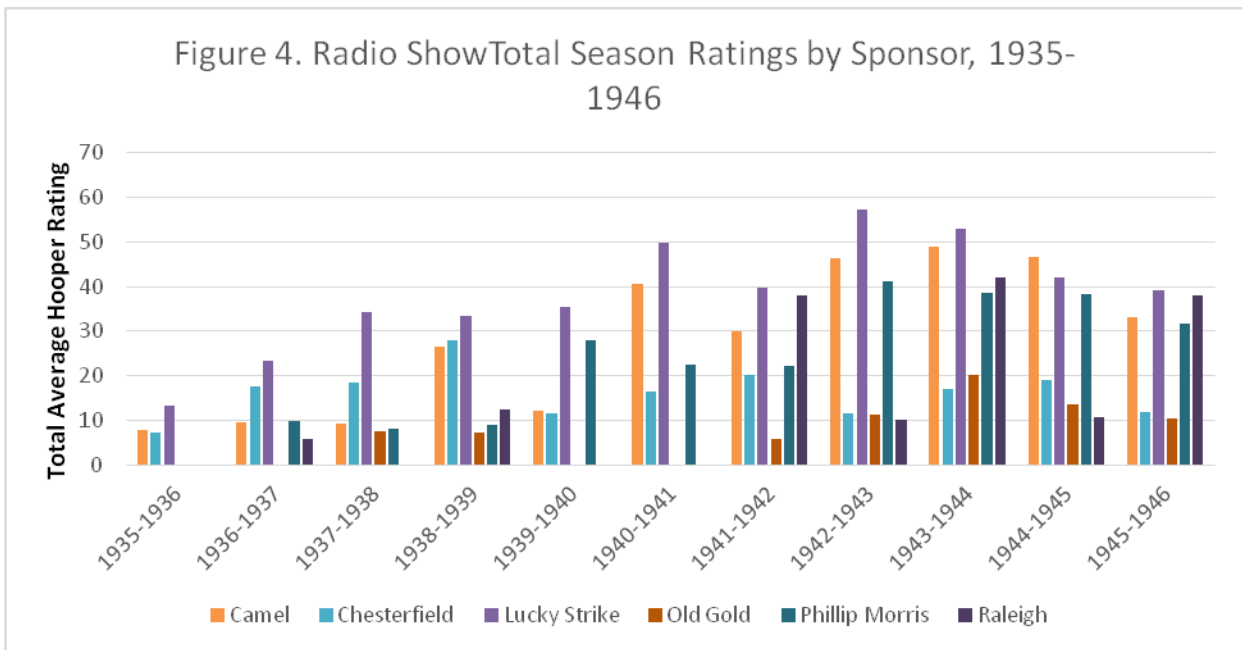
Sales figures compiled from Neil Borden's *The Economic Effects of Advertising* (1947), The American Tobacco Company's *Domestic Sales and Advertising Expenditures of the Three Leading Brands of Cigarettes* (1944), and Printer's Ink's *Tax-Paid Cigarette Output by Brands* (1945) and *Tax Paid Cigarette Output by Brands* (1946).

Figure 3. Hollywood Endorsements in Advertising by Brand, 1927-1951



Graph taken from Lum, K. L., J. R. Polansky, R. K. Jackler, and S. A. Glantz. "Signed, Sealed and Delivered: "Big Tobacco" in Hollywood, 1927-1951." *Tobacco Control* 17, no. 5 (October 2008): 313-23.

Figure 4. Radio Show Total Season Ratings by Sponsor, 1935-1946



Ratings data taken from Summers, Harrison B. *A Thirty-Year History of Programs Carried on National Radio Networks in the United States 1926-1956*, 20, 25. New York: Arno Press, 1971.

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