

Advertising Club of Toledo History

Theodore MacManus: Automotive Advertising Great

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Some of you advertising history buffs out there may have heard of Theodore MacManus, but did you know that he was a member of the Advertising Club of Toledo? Our most famous member, Theodore MacManus was born in 1872 in Buffalo, NY and was the advertising manager for Kobacker's Department Store, a chain of stores with locations in New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, and eventually owners of Tiedtke's in downtown Toledo. While working at the Kobacker's here in Toledo, he wrote the memorable slogan, "You'll Do Better at Kobacker's" which he later reworked as "You'll Do Better in Toledo" to promote business and industry in the growing community.

In 1903, he opened the MacManus Kelly Company, an advertising agency with offices in Detroit and Toledo. He helped introduce the Chrysler and Dodge nameplates and among other brands he handled were Cadillac, DeSoto, Hupmobile, Maxwell, Overland, Packard, Pontiac and Studebaker. MacManus coined the term, "Dependability" for the Dodge Brothers Motor Company, a line of cars known for their quality. Dodge car owners often wrote to the company in praise of their well-built and reliable cars and used the word "dependable" so frequently that MacManus used his newly-formed term dependability in his Dodge ad campaign. It was so successful that the company continued to use it for the next 50 years.

In 1915, MacManus wrote his most famous ad, "The Penalty of Leadership" for the Cadillac Motor Car Company. In September of 1914, after previously standing behind its four-cylinder engine and stating that it had no intention of marketing a six-cylinder car like its close competitor, Packard, Cadillac made the stunning announcement of its eight-cylinder, "V-type" engine. Paige-Detroit announced its new six-cylinder Paige autos in the January 2, 1915, issue of the Saturday Evening Post magazine and in the same issue the Cadillac Motor Car Co. placed "The Penalty of Leadership." The provocative title is as striking today as it must have been then. The ad makes no extravagant product claims but instead warns the potential Cadillac customer that he must be willing to endure the envy of others for being in the forefront. "The Penalty of Leadership," which ran only once, in the January 2, 1915, issue of The Saturday Evening Post, helped create an image for Cadillac as a prestigious marque which it retains to this day. Sales of the car surged and "The Penalty of Leadership" was voted "The Greatest Ad of All Time" in 1945, and later one of Ad Age's Top 100 Advertising Campaigns.

Cadillac repeated the ad in a different format in the January 11, 1919, issue of the Saturday Evening Post magazine and in 1967, Cadillac mailed out scrolls of "The Penalty of Leadership" to their customer list. Elvis was on that mailing list. He read "The Penalty of Leadership" and said that, even though the piece had been written before he was born, the author could have just as well been writing about him. Elvis felt it described his life, so he framed the scroll and hung it near the desk in his office at Graceland.

In 1927, he founded MacManus Inc., an agency that specialized in automotive advertising. That company became MacManus, John & Adams in 1934, and later was absorbed into D'Arcy

MacManus Benton & Bowles, later DMB&B. Although they dropped the name MacManus from their name for a while, that company later named itself the MacManus Group.

In 1927, MacManus wrote The Sword-Arm of Business a book about business, advertising and positioning, long before the term “positioning” was coined. He also hired and mentored Leo Burnett, another advertising great who created Tony the Tiger and the Pillsbury Dough Boy, among other advertising icons.

A devout Catholic, MacManus and his wife, Alice built the stone church of St. Hugo of the Hills Parish on their family estate, Stonycroft, after the death of two of their sons. In addition to becoming the permanent parish church of Bloomfield Hills, MI, it was to become a memorial to their two sons, Hugo and Hubert, and the final resting place of the family. Construction began in 1931 with formal dedication taking place on June 28, 1936. Theodore MacManus died in 1940 and is interred at the church he built. Ironically, although he remains one of the advertising greats for his work with the Detroit car makers, he never learned to drive a car.