

## Candidates, Consumers, and Closers: Albert Lasker, Advertising, and American Politics

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*Modern advertising moved into the 20th century borne on many vehicles and distinguished by many techniques. Three of the most often used advertising techniques were "Reason Why" advertising, which compared similar products and gave consumers hard-headed, no-nonsense reasons why they should buy a certain product; testimonials, which featured celebrity endorsements; and pre-emptive claims, which touted a quality or process common to similarly produced products as being unique only to that brand. Albert Davis Lasker, president of the Lord & Thomas advertising agency of Chicago, championed all three advertising techniques in the early 20th century, although he was best known for his work in promoting the "reason why" style. He helped clients such as Van Camp's Pork and Beans, Lucky Strike Cigarettes, and Sunkist Oranges become business success stories. Lasker also worked in the political arena, helping the Republican Party gain control of the U.S. Congress in 1918 and then the Presidency in 1920. Lasker's work on behalf of Warren Harding, in particular, represented a fusion of modern advertising techniques, technology, and political practices in such a way as to set a standard for others in the new field of political advertising to follow.*

Albert Lasker loved to sell. As a young reporter for the Galveston, Texas, *Daily News*, he disguised himself as a Western Union messenger and sold Eugene Debs on an exclusive interview. As a copy boy for Lord & Thomas, a Chicago advertising agency, he sold his superiors on letting him have a territory vacated by a departing salesman and wound up producing record sales. He helped sell clients on the idea of letting agencies write as well as place copy, and on "reason why" advertising, which promoted one product over another. He helped sell clients on slogans such as "Keep that Schoolgirl Complexion," "The Grains Shot from Guns," and "A Cow in Every Pantry." That meant millions of dollars in sales for Palmolive Soap, Quaker Oats, and Van Camp's Evaporated Milk.

But as much as Lasker loved to sell, he could also be sold. He began his adult life as a journalist and a Democrat but was later sold on becoming an advertiser and a Republican. Lasker (p. 7) reminisced, "My father had a

dread of my becoming a newspaper man, because in those days almost every newspaper man was a heavy drinker. He proposed instead that I go to a firm he considered a kindred field—Lord & Thomas in Chicago, an advertising firm with whom he had some prior contact." Lord & Thomas was started in 1873 by Daniel Lord and Ambrose Thomas, who had both migrated from Maine. The agency specialized in ads for buggies, railroads, and pianos (Lord & Thomas, p. 4). Other clients included Armour Meat Packing and Anheuser Busch. In 1898, Lasker began a 90-day try-out at Lord & Thomas as the agency's copy boy and janitor (Lasker, p. 11). At the end of 90 days Lasker would be free to leave and pursue journalism. While in Chicago he amassed a huge gambling debt and was forced to ask Ambrose Thomas for a loan to clear his name (Lasker, p. 11). It took him over a year to repay the loan, and by that time advertising had replaced journalism as his vocation.

If Albert Lasker had some early reservations about his new line of work, he was not alone. As the 19th century gave way to the 20th, American businesses were themselves just beginning to come to terms with the idea of letting independent advertising agencies represent them to the public. But getting used to the idea that a business would be so big that it would have to depend on an outside firm to handle its advertising was even harder. But the march towards big business was well under way by the time independent advertising agencies arrived on the scene. The foundation, laid in stages before the Civil War, was already in place. Transportation networks, most importantly the railroad, were able to move people and products from one end of the United States to the other. This made it possible for manufacturers to tap into a huge domestic market.

The second half of the foundation was the revolution in communications. Business growth had chafed under the unreliable management of its affairs by mail. Some firms found that in order for their invoices and statements to reach their destinations safely, multiple copies had to be sent. Surface mail improved upon its delivery capabilities in the last quarter of the 19th century, but news of its replacement was being transmitted telegraphically. It was the rapid improvement in communications, via the telegraph, and in transportation, via the railroad, that made it possible for mass merchandisers to make the United States one large sales territory (Lasker, p. 44).

Which brings us back to the uneasy relationship between advertisers and advertising agencies. Most businesses simply prepared their own copy and gave it to firms such as Lord & Thomas to buy display space in newspapers and magazines. There was often deep suspicion at the corporate level whether an ad agency, which didn't produce the product, could do a better job than the producer in selling it. As a result, advertisers resented and frequently opposed the suggestions of agencies, which in turn reminded their clients that the advertisement was for the buyer's eye, not the seller's (Laird 1998, p. 198). When Albert Lasker joined Lord & Thomas in 1898, it had just one copywriter, who split his days between the agency and Montgomery Ward (Lasker, p. 16). The design department also consisted of one employee who earned \$25 a week (Wood 1958, p. 245). All that began to change as business began to see itself as not just a local or regional entity, but a national one. The evolution motivated many business managers to seek professional advertising assistance (Laird 1998, p. 209). Albert Lasker helped transform advertising's static image as head of one of the first agencies to renounce its reluctance in taking responsibility for copy writing and claim an ability to enhance the manufacturers' control over their marketing channels (Laird 1998, p. 199). Acceptance of the new style came in stages, even at Lord & Thomas. First, Lasker bought out Daniel Lord in 1903, to share ownership with Ambrose Thomas (Lasker, p. 45). Second, Lasker learned and would soon come to champion a new form of advertising called "reason why" copy writing. The new style stressed that advertising must act more like the salesmen often found (and occasionally dreaded) at one's doorstep. The print version must give readers a reason why they should buy a certain product. It must be positive but also aggressive. Armed with the new technique, Lasker took Lord & Thomas up ladder of the ad agency hierarchy. By 1912, the year Lasker became sole owner of the firm, annual billings had topped \$6,000,000 (Fox 1984, p. 61). Several examples could explain the impact of the "reason why" approach. Among the ones I have provided today are ads for Kotex, Lucky Strike cigarettes, and Van Camp's Pork and Beans. They are important not only because of their effectiveness as examples of "reason why" advertising but also because the advertised products were, at the time, unheard of, unpopular, or socially unacceptable.

The Kotex campaign was launched in the 1920s. The Kimberly Clark Corporation had responded to the World War I shortage of cotton for use in bandages and surgical supplies by creating "cellucotton." Nurses used cellucotton as sanitary napkins during the war, and once the shooting stopped Kotex (short for cotton-line texture) was put on the market. But because public discussion of menstruation was considered taboo and because ad copy designed to discuss the issue was too vague to understand, the product failed miserably. Lasker landed the account in 1926 (Lord & Thomas, p. 26). His pitch combined a campaign to inform school boards and other organizations nationwide about Kotex and how teachers could perform a valuable service

by telling female students about feminine hygiene. Then he convinced the editors of the *Ladies' Home Journal* to publish an article about menstruation. Finally, he devised a way for women to buy the product without embarrassment. Newspaper ads told them that "Kotex," in a wrapped package that gave no clue as to its identity, would be available in shops and did not even have to be asked for by name. The customer would put 50 cents in a box near a pile of packages, take one, and walk out without having to say a word to anyone (Lasker, p. 105).

Lucky Strike was another important account for Albert Lasker, eventually representing nearly 60 percent of Lord & Thomas's billings. One of the first things Lasker did after landing the account was to redirect its marketing approach to include a long-excluded segment of the consuming population: women. Women were not allowed to smoke in public, so when the urge to light up struck them, especially when out on the town, they often had to seek refuge in public restrooms (Lasker, p. 106). Making it socially acceptable for women to smoke in public would help sales for all the tobacco producers, including Lucky Strike. Changing public attitudes about women's smoking was going to be tricky, but a pivotal event close to home may have been the incentive for Lasker to take up the challenge. Lasker's wife Flora had been diagnosed with an eating disorder, and her doctor suggested she take up smoking to curb appetite. One day she and Lasker were having dinner in one of their favorite restaurants when, following doctor's orders, Flora lit a cigarette. Within minutes the manager appeared at their table with an offer to seat them in a private room in deference to patrons who were objecting. The issue had become personal for Albert Lasker, and he used his clout with Lucky Strike to redress that personal grievance and recalibrate social customs.

The advertising campaign evolved in two stages. First, Lasker would have to create an environment where women could feel comfortable smoking in public. Society was not going to grant that automatically. Therefore, women would have to help convince other women that it was all right to smoke. But the women promoting the idea would have to be secure in their positions, unassailable, and insulated from any possible backlash. European women, especially those in the performing arts, seemed to be the answer. Lasker thought these women might be worthy of emulation by their American counterparts. He convinced a group of celebrated singers to give testimonials for Lucky Strike as part of its "Precious Voice" campaign. "As they were singers, they said 'My living is dependent on my being able to sing, and I protect my precious voice by smoking Lucky Strike.' The campaign was a very alluring one, because it was built around alluring people. It was very dramatic in that they testified that . . . by smoking Luckies . . . there would be no rasp and no ill consequences" (Lasker, pp. 109-110). Other ads proclaimed "Cigarettes Are Kind To Your Throat" (Gunther 1960, p. 168). Before long a number of artists with the Metropolitan Opera of New York provided testimonials, lending their credibility and receiving national

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publicity in return (Lasker, p. 110). The power of the testimonial was being felt throughout the advertising world. Coaches and athletes also recommended Luckies for throat protection, but the main focus continued to be women.

The second phase of the Lucky Strike campaign was more defensive in nature. Candy makers could hardly be expected to remain idle as women forsook their wares for cigarettes. Calling an emergency meeting in Pittsburgh, the confectioners planned to respond with an advertising campaign of their own. "The main argument that they were going to put forward was that cigarette smoking was not good for the nervous system and for general health. The way to stop it was to eat a piece of candy. If you ate a piece of candy the sweetness would fix your saliva so that you would lose your taste to smoke. Then I remembered that the doctor had told my wife to smoke to cut down her appetite for sweets. That justifies us in reverse in making the claim for Lucky Strike" (Lasker, p. 111).

Lasker and the American Tobacco Company fought back, overpowering candy makers with a series of ads warning that candy contributed to obesity. Smoking could reduce candy cravings, thus cutting down on those unflattering calories. "Then we added to our copy with each of our testifiers that they protected their precious voices and their precious figures by smoking Lucky Strike cigarettes" (Lasker, p. 113). "Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet," urged the copy, and figure-conscious women, influenced by feminine celebrities from both stage and screen, put down the candy and lit up.

But it was pork and beans that helped Albert Lasker transition from the world of advertising to the world of politics. His work on behalf of Van Camp's Pork and Beans helped make the company a hit with housewives across the country. The campaign stressed that women had better things to do than spend an entire day preparing pork and beans. Van Camp's Pork and Beans, Lasker argued, saved women time and provided flavor not found in homemade dishes. Lasker himself was so sure of the product that he advanced the company a year of free advertising. When the owners couldn't pay off, they did the next best thing: They gave him and four other large creditors a stake in the company. "One of these four men was William Irwin, a Columbus, Indiana, banker. He subsequently became the Republican National Committeeman from Indiana" (Lasker, p. 116).

Irwin was elected in 1918, the same year fellow Hoosier Will Hays was named RNC Chairman (Gunther 1960, p. 98). Nationally the GOP was in tatters in the wake of the defection by Progressives. The trouble had started back in 1907 when Progressives and regular Republicans began to clash over ideological differences. As chairman of the Indiana GOP Hays had healed the rift between Republicans and Progressives there, and it was thought his elevation to head of the RNC would produce the same results nationwide. He spent the first few months as national chairman traveling the country in order to mend party fences. But policy issues threatened to tear apart the

reconciliation he was trying to engineer. Party debate intensified in January 1918 when Woodrow Wilson unveiled his Fourteen Points, which included his plan for a League of Nations. Theodore Roosevelt and Hiram Johnson led the isolationist camp, whereas other Republican leaders, including William Howard Taft, felt some type of international coalition was worth considering (Parkes 1941, p. 349). A faction led by Henry Cabot Lodge also emerged, calling for revisions of particular sections of the Fourteen Points dealing with the League (Goldman 1990, p. 295). In addition to presiding over a party that seemed to be headed in multiple directions and defying his attempts to unify it, Will Hays also found himself in charge of a political organization badly in need of cash. He contacted Will Irwin for advice. Hays told Irwin, "What I need is a man who can establish our public relations. I need that more than anything, and I do not know how to cast about for such a man" (Lasker, p. 116). Irwin introduced Hays to Lasker, who enlisted him in the GOP as head of publicity, and together they helped the party win big in the 1918 congressional elections and position itself to recapture the presidency in 1920.

The successful drive to recapture the House in 1918 was due in part to Woodrow Wilson's poor timing, the GOP's good timing, and Albert Lasker's use of commercial advertising techniques, in particular "reason why" advertising. The opportunity for the Republicans came as something of a gift, delivered by none other than Wilson himself, who abandoned his wartime nonpartisan "politics is adjourned" stance in favor of a very partisan push for a Democrat-controlled Congress. Wilson reasoned such an environment would make passage of his Fourteen Points that much easier.

There's no telling what Wilson's appeal may have had on voters had it not been seized upon by Republican strategists as a golden opportunity. If the president's comments could be sold to voters as a threat to the democratic process, then the GOP might have found a way to recapture control of Congress. The eleventh-hour counterattack began on October 28 with a blistering attack on Wilson's partisan appeal. The message bore many of the "reason why" advertising tactics Lasker used when he was working with clients at Lord & Thomas. In a statement to Republicans across the country, Will Hays claimed the "President has questioned the motives and fidelity of your representatives in Congress. He has thereby impugned their loyalty and denied their patriotism. His challenge is to you who elected those representatives. You owe it to them, to the honor of your great party and to your own self-respect to meet that challenge squarely, not only as Republicans, but as Americans" (Lasker, p. 116). His comments as to why Republicans should repudiate Wilson at the polls the following week contained even more "reason why" advertising logic: "Republicans have been pro-war. Then why does he [Wilson] demand their defeat? It is because they are for peach through, not without, victory; because they do not believe lasting peace can be obtained through

negotiation; because they consider that 'U.S.' stands for Unconditional Surrender as well as for the United States and Uncle Sam. The Democratic Congress does not. Mr. Wilson does not. There is the issue as clear as the noonday sun" ("I Say Fight" 1918, p. 1).

Albert Lasker, through Will Hays, had compared Republicans to Democrats in much the same fashion as his advertising agency had compared Lucky Strike cigarettes and Van Camp's Pork and Beans to its competitors. Will Hays felt so optimistic about how voters might respond that he predicted Republican victories in both the House and the Senate. He was right. On Tuesday, November 5, Republicans rolled to their largest electoral plurality since 1906, getting 1,200,000 more votes than the Democrats (Margulies 1996, p. 287). The GOP now controlled the Senate by a 49-47 margin and the House by a 239-194 spread. It would seem that all the GOP had to do was nominate someone for president in 1920 and the White House would be back in its hands.

This was going to prove to be easier said than done. Following Theodore Roosevelt's death in 1919, Senator Hiram Johnson (California) and Leonard Wood (New Hampshire) fought for the hearts and minds of the Progressive wing of the Republican Party. By December of that year the field of possible candidates had swelled to nine, including Illinois Governor Frank Bowden and Ohio Senator Warren Harding. Albert Lasker was not a Harding supporter, and it would be some time before he would agree to devote his energies to a man whose views on the League of Nations he thought suspicious. "It was essential to nominate someone had died, and many party leaders such as Taft seemed to be going along with [President] Wilson. We tried to get Senator Borah to run. He wouldn't do it, even when Senator Hiram Johnson tried to get him to, so Johnson agreed to do it" (Lasker, p. 125).

But Hiram Johnson was reluctant to campaign actively, and that reluctance cost him time and support. When he finally decided to run, Progressives not committed to either Wood or Bowden scrambled to help him catch up. Because of Johnson's late entry, there was no chance for him to build a winning campaign based on organizational support. Furthermore, several primaries had already been held, and many of the delegates had gone to Wood or Bowden. To pull even with them prior to the June convention in Chicago would be difficult and expensive. But cost was not going to be a deterrent to Albert Lasker, who was learning money could level most political playing fields. He oversaw Johnson's publicity in the remaining primaries, and contributed financially to his campaign. By the time the Johnson campaign arrived in Chicago and set up its headquarters in preparation for the Republican convention, over 100 delegates had been pledged to him (Gunther 1960, p. 108). As for Warren Harding, his campaign was on life support by the time he got to Chicago. He did poorly as a candidate, even in his own state of Ohio, which gave him only a portion of its convention delegates. Things looked so bleak that he re-filed for the U.S. Senate race in Ohio,

beating the deadline by less than an hour (Sullivan 1926, p. 595).

The GOP convention ground to a halt almost as soon as it was gavelled into session. With Frank Bowden, Leonard Wood, and Hiram Johnson jammed at the top and none showing any signs of retreating, it seemed like a perfect opportunity for a dark-horse candidate to make a successful play for the nomination. But despite the rumblings about a compromise candidate, Albert Lasker and other Johnson supporters were sticking with their man. "We had taken a suite for Senator Johnson at the Blackstone Hotel. His suite was almost directly under the suite which is known as the 'smoke-filled room'" (Lasker, p. 128).

Between 8 P.M. and 2 A.M. Saturday morning senators filed into and milled about suite 404, each contributing ideas as to how to break the impasse. Reporters who caught wind of the meeting staked out suite 404 and buttonholed senators as they came and went. Reed Smoot told one he thought the convention would turn to Harding. Charles Curtis of Kansas said the same thing. Regardless of who spoke to the press, the message was generally the same: The frontrunners had serious liabilities, the deadlock was unbreakable, and Harding seemed the most available choice (Lasker, p. 128).

On Saturday June 12, at 2:45 P.M., Warren Harding was informed that he had become the compromise candidate of the Republican Party (Hays 1955, p. 249). One floor below, Albert Lasker and other Hiram Johnson supporters waiting in Johnson's suite, were about to get the news from an unlikely messenger. "About three or four of us were sitting in his [Johnson's] suite about two o'clock in the morning the day the nomination was made when Senator Harding came in. That was the first time I met Harding. He said he wanted to talk to Johnson alone, and they went into the bedroom. They talked for five or ten minutes, and when Harding left, Johnson was livid with anger. He said, 'I like Harding. I like him very much, but I can't conceive of him being President of the United States. He's done nothing to deserve it. He tells me they have just agreed upstairs to make him President, and he came down to ask me, wouldn't I run as Vice President?'" (Lasker, p. 131). Johnson refused, and the vice presidential spot eventually went to Massachusetts Governor Calvin Coolidge.

Warren Harding's election as president in 1920 would end eight years of Democratic Party control of the White House. It would also signal that a new alliance had been forged between politics and modern advertising. Albert Lasker was a significant player in both events. He became a power unto himself during the 1920 presidential campaign, responsible and accountable to only RNC Chairman Will Hays. Lasker packaged Harding in such a way as to help humanize him, magnifying those assets strategists thought most appealing to voters and at the same time hiding problems or minimizing campaign gaffes. Packaging and presentation would feature many new advertising and technological advancement: market segmentation, the use

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of the movie camera, highway billboards, and the phonograph.

Lasker also had a hand in revamping some older campaign gimmicks, such as the front-porch campaign. Strategists liked the idea of Harding campaigning from his house in Marion, Ohio. It was an excellent way to showcase the candidate as a folksy, hard-working, small-town American who preferred Main Street to Pennsylvania Avenue. Strategists also thought it would reduce the chances of Harding's verbally shooting himself in the foot. A front-porch campaign "assured a correct public version of deliberate statements" (Bagby 1967, p. 125). It meant, quite literally, that the GOP would control what Harding said and what was said to him. It was Lasker's job to milk the front-porch events for everything they were worth in terms of publicity. Two front-porch events in particular stand out as bearing Albert Lasker's personal touch; they demonstrated Lasker's use of "reason why," testimonial, and preemptive advertising strategies. The first involved the use of show business personalities to endorse Harding. Americans had become used to seeing movie stars drum up support for Liberty Bond sales during World War II, but few celebrities had cast themselves in the role of partisan spokespersons for a candidate. Lasker was one of the first advertising executives to recognize the power of film and radio as a way to advertise products. The *Amos 'n' Andy Show* was created by Lord & Thomas as a medium to advertise Pepsodent Toothpaste. Later, a young comedian named Bob Hope was given a chance to make a success of a radio show also sponsored by Pepsodent and orchestrated by Lord & Thomas. Although the technology for radio broadcasting had not reached a point in 1920 that would make it a valuable campaign tool, the parallel technologies of sound and film had, and would be, used by Lasker to help advertise Warren Harding. In fact, many of the actors and the actresses who joined the "Harding-Coolidge Theatrical League" were already making the transition from stage and vaudeville to the silver screen. They included Mary Pickford, Ethyl Barrymore, Pearl White, Lillian Gish, and Pauline Frederick. Al Jolson served as the League's president. In late August, trains from New York and Chicago converged on Marion, bearing seventy of the League's brightest stars. They marched from the train station to Harding's home, led by a marching band. They posed for pictures with the candidate and serenaded him with a song entitled "Harding, You're The Man For Us," written by Jolson for just this occasion (Downes 1970, p. 473):

We need a man to guide us  
Who'll always stand beside us,  
One who is a fighter through and through  
A man who'll make the White House  
Shine out just like a lighthouse  
And Mister Harding, we've selected you.  
Harding, lead the G.O.P.  
Harding, on to Victory!

We're here to make a fuss!  
Mister Harding, you're the man for us!

We know we'll always find him  
With Coolidge right behind him  
And Coolidge never fails, you must agree  
We know he will be guarding  
The Nation just like Harding  
When they are both in Washington, D.C.

Harding, Coolidge is your mate  
Harding, lead the ship of state,  
You'll get the people's vote  
And you'll also get the Donkey's goat!<sup>1</sup>

The celebrity endorsement of Harding was intended to give rank and file voters flesh and bone "reasons why" Harding was the preferred candidate of the entertainment community.

The second front-porch event that clearly bore Lasker's signature involved Harding's image. Lasker had made successful use of the motion picture camera throughout the campaign, filming the candidate as he welcomed various delegations and then making copies for viewing in theaters across the country. The camera was also used to capture Harding working in his newspaper office, voting on primary day, and supervising the distribution of World War I government surplus supplies (Downes 1970, p. 474).

But Lasker soon discovered that in some movie houses the image people were getting of Harding was not what he or the GOP wanted them to see. They saw the candidate, of course, but in addition to seeing him work, vote, or campaign, they were also seeing him play golf, considered at the time an elitist sport. It worried Lasker that the image might give voters the wrong impression about Harding; it might even alienate them. He began to think about how he could quickly put Harding in the best possible light and put the golf blunder behind him. The answer, of course, was to create an association between Harding and the sport many Americans followed: baseball. There had always been a connection between baseball and politics; politicians always seemed to be on hand for opening day festivities. But what if a politician not only showed up at a game but actually played? The public relations bonanza would be priceless, and the golf gaffe would appear on the political goof meter as an insignificant blip.

On the surface, there would appear to be a number of problems that would make such a stunt impossible. Finding two major league teams to play would be one of them, followed by the expense of staging the game itself. But perhaps the most daunting problem was to make it all look natural and not some ham-fisted attempt to manipulate the nation's pastime into a crass, cynical media event just for the sake of a few votes. Serious problems? Not for Albert Lasker. He owned a piece of the Chicago Cubs along with chewing gum mogul William Wrigley Jr. (Gunther 1960, p. 118).<sup>2</sup> Wrigley was also a Harding supporter, which

provided Lasker the perfect smokescreen behind which to orchestrate the entire event without leaving any RNC fingerprints. Getting another major league team to play was a problem, despite the fact that Lasker's connections gained him access to the front offices of the New York Giants, the Cleveland Indians, and the Cincinnati Reds.

Ultimately, the answer to who would play the Cubs was found in Harding's very own hometown of Marion, Ohio, which also happened to be home to the Kerrigan Tailors, a minor league team affiliated with the Ohio State League (Downes 1970, p. 472). In a sense, the Tailors presented partial answers to two problems. It would cost nothing to transport the team to the game, because Marion was its hometown. And having the Tailors play certainly fit in with Lasker's strategy. The appearance of local participation would give the impression the event was a homegrown affair, a natural and sincere expression of a town's love and appreciation of its favorite son.

On September 2, Lasker's plan, along with the Chicago Cubs and the Kerrigan Tailors, took the field at Marion's Lincoln Park.<sup>3</sup> The Cubs won the game, 3-1, though it was doubtful that anyone really cared. What people and the press came to see was possibly the next president of the United States not only enjoy but take part in the national pastime. Because, suited up and taking the mound for the Cubs that day was none other than Warren Harding. He started the first inning, threw three pitches, and then was lifted for Cubs ace Grover Cleveland Alexander, who went on to clinch the victory. But Lasker wasn't through exploiting the situation. There, on the field and still in uniform, Harding took time out from the game to talk about "team play." He accused Woodrow Wilson and the Democratic Party of trying to "go it alone" during the Versailles Peace Conference, in the process rejecting Republican assistance. "You can't win a ball game with a one-man team. I am opposing one-man play for the nation. The national team, now playing for the United States, played loosely, and muffed disappointingly the more domestic affairs, and then struck out at Paris. Hail to the team play of America!" (Schortemeier 1920, pp. 107-108).

The photo opportunity and the speech were both public relations triumphs. Now, when moviegoers saw Harding on the silver screen, they were more likely to see him toeing the rubber instead of teeing off. It apparently did wonders, for the effort to humanize Harding reinforced the advantages of keeping the candidate at home so problems like these could be quickly and effectively handled.

By helping the GOP humanize Harding while simultaneously heaping scorn on the Democrats, Albert Lasker put together an advertising campaign that utilized the basic elements of commercial advertising. "Reason why" appeals, coupled with testimonials by celebrities in the sport and entertainment worlds, produced an impression on voters that Democrats couldn't overcome. The November results were proof. Harding won 404 of a possible 531 electoral votes, got over 60 percent of the

popular vote, and carried 37 of 48 states. The numbers added up to a vindication of Lasker's advertising strategy.

Historians have been quick to overlook Albert Lasker's work, preferring to focus instead on such figures as Bruce Barton and Rosser Reeves and countless others whose contributions were bracketed by those two. But the techniques Lasker brought from commercial advertising, the mediums used to convey his message, and the markets he sought to convince have not been lost on the practitioners of modern political communication, only perfected in their practice and expanded in their scope. Less than four years after Lasker's experience, advertising executive Bruce Barton wrote to the Republican National Committee that the "signed testimonial is the best idea that has ever come along" (Barton 1924, Box 16, Folder 7, No. 24). A few decades later, Rosser Reeves would deliver this blunt assessment of the power of commercial advertising in politics, describing "a man in a voting booth who hesitates between two levers as if he were posing between competing tubes of toothpaste in a drugstore. The brand that has made the highest penetration on his brain will win his choice" (Westbrook 1983, p. 155). Albert Lasker realized the importance of humanizing political candidates, thereby building an unbreakable bond with the voter. His ability to keep Harding on the front porch for most of the campaign helped the candidate project an image of friendliness, neighborliness, and accessibility. Additionally, Lasker's use of market research and segmentation helped the GOP tailor its message appeal to many different voters. Finally, his use of various advertising techniques proved Lasker's worth not only as a packager of candidates but as deliverer of customers as well.

Years after the 1920 presidential election and despite numerous changes in technology affecting the messages delivered to voters and the way voting groups are identified, the way those messages are packaged has not changed very much since Albert Lasker convinced the political world that it could prosper from the experience of the commercial world. It might have been one of the most important selling jobs ever done, and Albert Lasker should get credit for closing the sale.

## NOTES

1. The sheet music was located on-line at the University of South Florida Tampa Campus Library, Special Collections Department, Presidential Items, Warren G. Harding, as part of the Armwood Family Collection: <http://www.lib.usf.edu/spccoll/guide/p/pres/p283.html>. Interestingly, Downes (1970, p. 473) presents a different set of lyrics.
2. Lasker bought a \$150,000 interest in the Cubs in 1916 and then got Wrigley and meat packer Ogden Armour to buy in for \$50,000 each. Wrigley ultimately became the principal owner.
3. The Cubs had just finished a home stand in Chicago and were off between August 31 and September 3,

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before meeting the Pirates in Pittsburgh. Their schedule, provided by the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, would seem to indicate there was plenty of time for a brief detour to Marion before resuming league play.

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