

Madison Avenue



The World of the Mini

IF ANYONE questions whether Americans are faddists, witness how many businessmen and journalists have jumped on the word *mini*. Almost daily, it seems, there is a proliferation of the word in marketing terminology in packages, products, promotional terms, names, and references by companies.

It is journalistic coverage, though, which has really made it take hold. This is not surprising to anybody in the field of communications who is paid to popularize words, products, and ideas. But the mini concept today is in the public domain. And it is the journalists who have converted it into a cliché.

The Washington Bureau of the Chicago *Daily News*, for example, reports that Congress is being asked to create four mini-vacations (three day weekends) a year by shifting the dates for observing national holidays. *Newsweek* views children's programming on TV as a mini-wasteland. *Parade*, the Sunday supplement, one week presented a batch of Mini-Quips. A few weeks later, the same publication's food recipe page featured raisin mini-muffins. The highly-respected *Home Furnishings Daily* devoted a two-page spread to mini-merchandising. And a Chicago rock'n'roll radio station, WCFL, has played "mini-tunes"—part of songs. And so the mini craze goes. When or where it will stop depends on its exposure.

It is no secret that the impetus behind the massive mini-movement was created by the mini-skirt's introduction to fashion circles in the United States a few years ago. What is surprising is that the influence of the word *mini* on vocabularies of so many communicators took so long in this country. The whole concept of miniaturization has been going on for some time, especially in the hearing aid industry, aerospace technology, and miniature circuitry for TV sets and transistor radios.

According to a recent article in *The New York Times*, the mini-style is showing signs of lessening in England, the mini-skirt's mother country. But the phrase is gaining momentum in this country, appealing to more and more businesses for which it was not intended.

Consider the imposing array of products—some new, many old—bearing the word *mini* or using it for description today. For example, there's a thermo jug,

marketed by Alladin Industries, that's described as almost a mini-ice box. Panasonic's new lineup of home entertainment products this year includes a Mini-Console—a radio-stereo phonograph unit which is a foot deep and less than a foot high. There are a large number of mini-branded products in the appliance and houseware industries.

Seagram Distillers Company, one of the marketing divisions of giant Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, began marketing a Mini-Pak earlier this winter. The package consists of miniature bottles of Seagram liquor brands (each containing one-tenth of a pint). These are the same bottles given to first-class passengers, or purchased, on airline flights. They are illegal for sale in thirty-nine states. Despite this somewhat limited distribution, Seagram decided to go the mini-route (my own coined phrase) because of its sampling advantages. Once a customer has been exposed to a brand through a miniature, there's always the possibility that he or she can be converted into a customer for a larger size.

BUT there are many mini-products. Mini-cameras have appeared on retail counters. The Minox Camera, an import from West Germany, has been sold for some time in this country with good success. Mini-bicycles also have been on the market. And in the world of apparel makers, the follow-the-leader philosophy of some marketers has resulted in mini-purses, mini-blouses, mini-pants, and a mini-Shet (a new type of sweater imported from France; Shet is short for Shetland). There's even a pacer, called Mini-Boy, who has been trotting around the harness race track circuit. Mini-Boy recently returned \$19.40 for every bettor who plunked down \$2 for the horse to win. Mini-Boy's record: He's finished in the money one out of three starts so far. Not bad for a trend.

Whatever the product, every marketer who has adapted the mini concept is looking for increased sales. There is a concept of borrowed interest in fads, whether it's a mini-product, hula hoop, or a Batman.

Timing, naturally, is important in borrowing a concept for a specific product. "If you get on the cycle early enough, you have a chance to capitalize," says Paul Brickman, vice president

of Fuller & Smith & Ross. "But sometimes it's hard to determine whether the fad or term you've picked up is going up or is on the downslide. This, of course, is based on how many firms have jumped on the bandwagon already. And the degree of exposure it's had."

Putting a halo like mini on a product may or may not give it an advantage, though it's worth a try in today's competitive marketplace. In many product categories, there is little if any differentiation. Consumers are increasingly becoming aware of this. According to David Hardin, president of Market Facts, one of the nation's best marketing research firms, there are no brand new products, only adaptations of existing ones. This puts even heavier emphasis on advertising and marketing hooks which attract and beguile the consumer.

Getting the shopper's attention is difficult. The average consumer is bombarded daily with 1,600 advertising messages, a figure which may rise to 2,000 at the beginning of the next decade. Recall will be more of a problem unless there is something about a product or the advertising message that clicks.

THE awesome losses on new products and ideas is another reason why a borrowed term might help a certain product. According to Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn, American companies invested \$6.1 billion on developing new products last year. Seventy per cent of this sum, or \$4.2 billion, was wasted on ideas that did not develop or on products that failed, says BBDO's marketing department.

How long the mini concept will last is hard to determine. But if it does as well as the business generated by the Batman and 007 labels on products, it will be a huge success. Almost 1,000 products with the Batman name were on the market last year, reports the Licensing Corporation of America, which holds the licensing rights to Batman as well as 007. Through the end of 1966, products identified with the Batman name accounted for an estimated \$150 million in sales. Products bearing the 007 tag have done better: \$100 million alone in 1966 sales—almost twice as much volume as in the previous year. Licensing Corporation believes that 007 endorsed products have a good chance to stay on the market for another decade.

What will be the next fad to which manufacturers will orient their selling needs? Watch media every day for the introduction of a new style, toy, or concept that looks like the brainchild of some clever word merchant. Circle it and send it to your boss and tell him to watch it closely. The absurd phrase may become part of his next marketing program.

—GEORGE LAZARUS.

Book Collecting, Anyone?

By JOHN T. WINTERICH

IN JUNE 1962, DeCoursey Fales, chairman emeritus of the board of the Bank for Savings in New York City, took his fifty-nine-foot staysail schooner *Nina* from Newport to Hamilton in the annual Bermuda run of 635 miles. There were 131 starters, and *Nina* carried the day. This was the first time in thirty-two years that a schooner had won the event. It was also the first time ever that any entry had been commanded by a seventy-four-year-old skipper.

DeCoursey Fales died in New York last June, a few days after his seventy-eighth birthday, close to the fourth anniversary of his supreme maritime moment. But it is not as a navigator that he will primarily be remembered. There are several facets to his immortality, chief of which is the book collection he gave to New York University in 1959. It would be more accurate to say "started to give"; he continued giving books to NYU up to his death, and by the terms of his will his gifts will continue to accumulate. NYU authorities recently estimated that the Fales Library contains more than 50,000 books and more than 12,000 letters and manuscripts. The library is a memorial to the donor's father, Haliburton Fales (1849-1929), who fostered the son's interest in books.

Book collecting today is becoming more and more a public utility. Great assemblages of books—and assemblages of great books—will continue to gravitate to the auction room, but equally great and even greater collections have gone, are going, or will go to college and university libraries. Who are the collectors of these books? An impressive number of them are, or were, businessmen of stature (and, obviously, of some means), like DeCoursey Fales, each of whom had or has many interests in life. Consider three such noted collectors: Fales, Waller Barrett, and I. Robert Kriendler.

DeCoursey Fales was born in Saranac Lake Village June 1, 1888. He entered Harvard in 1907, the same year in which Bliss Perry, already editor of *Atlantic Monthly*, became a member of the Harvard English Department. For young Fales, this was an epochal conjunction. He had been an omnivorous reader since childhood; Bliss Perry channeled his interest toward the author—as Emerson said, "there must be a man behind the book." Fales also grad-

uated from Columbia University Law School, served as communications officer aboard the U.S. cruiser *Seattle* during World War I, and later became commodore of the New York Yacht Club and served as chairman of the advisory committee on sailing at the United States Naval Academy. In 1911 he joined the Bank for Savings, the oldest savings bank in the state, and he successively was president, chairman, and chairman emeritus; then, after the bank's merger in 1963 with the New York Savings Bank, a trustee and member of the executive committee of the merged institution, the New York Bank for Savings. During DeCoursey Fales's administration the bank, under whatever designation, became on various occasions an exhibition hall, an auditorium, and a museum.

There were no book shows, but of books unshown there was a continuing abundance. The Commodore was supplied by dealers all over the world. New York dealers delivered their wares to the bank by hand, out-of-towners by mail. At the close of the day's business the Commodore would fill his attaché case with the day's catch and carry it off to his country home in Garfield, New Jersey. Often the attaché case was not big enough, and in such crises the Commodore would not disdain to tote his haul in a stout paper shopping bag. Fortifying himself with a preprandial dry martini, he would settle down for a final gloat over his treasures before returning them to New York next morning for delivery to NYU, or sometimes to Manhattan College. The New York Public Library and the Pierpont Morgan Library were also beneficiaries of his largess.

The Fales collection's forte is the novel in English—from, say, the middle of the eighteenth century, or from Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* of 1740 and Henry Fielding's antiphonal *History of Joseph Andrews and His Friend Mr. Abraham Adams* of 1742. But the Commodore's bookish interests extended far and wide. "A Partial List of British Authors" in the Fales collection released at the dedication in 1959 ran to 158 names, and "A Partial List of American Authors" to 182; included in these two lists were such memorable non-novelists as Algernon Charles Swinburne, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Emily Dickinson, and Van Wyck Brooks. If the Commodore wanted



DeCoursey Fales — He bought what he wanted.



(Above) Clifton Waller Barrett—discriminating collector

(Below) Robert Kriendler—collects author-gourmets.

