

'Promise Them Anything' gives history of political commercials

By JAMES WALKER
Staff Writer

Political commercials today are a "fantasy depiction of an ideal state ... what the viewer sees is a cosmetic job," said James Hall, in a film presentation entitled "Promise Them Anything" sponsored by MSC Political Forum and MSC Great Issues Tuesday night.

But today it is easier to differentiate between political commercials for candidates and product commercials, Hall said. "In 1952, for instance we saw our first political television commercial produced by ABC that handled it like a general consumer good. Nowadays political commercials are in the hands of people who specialize in these type of things," he said.

Some people even specialize in Democratic as opposed to Republican candidates.

Hall, a media critic and researcher for Dick Clark's television series, Practical Jokes and Blooper's, has traveled the country and assembled

a vast collection of film clips from political commercials. The excerpts he presented Tuesday included soundless productions made from as far back as 1908 to the carefully orchestrated commercials of today.

In the 1940s and 1950s political television commercials often conveyed simple motifs such as the one used in Eisenhower's campaign for the presidency. It began with a singing melody saying, "You like Ike, I like Ike, everybody likes Ike."

Hall effectively characterized the commercials of those days for their naive honesty, and gripping sense of reality. In one commercial shown by Hall, Adlai Stevenson, the candidate, was having a family chat with his son and daughter — like something you would expect to see on "Leave it to Beaver" — yet the discussion centered on the prevention of future wars.

Back then "commercials ran anywhere from a four minute political spot to a half-hour Betty Crocker commercial ... and they were much

less expensive," he said.

Hall, author of the book "Mighty Minutes," has done well in pinning down a science out of what some would view as esoteric. Yet this subject is serious business to commercial producers who face far greater challenges than did their predecessors. They deal with, "how to address an apathetic audience that is being bombarded by a lot of commercials and resents the intrusion," Hall said.

While neglecting discussion on how a viewer could better prepare him or herself for the onslaught of campaign commercials in this election season he did give a good narrative of highlights in political commercial history.

Hall pointed out that some of the best television ads were done in the 1960s. At that time many were designed to elicit some kind of emotional response from the viewer.

In 1960, Nixon preferred to deliver a conservative discourse by the side of his desk concerning the Communist menace. Four years later,

President Johnson's strategists adopted a highly charged commercial that became a news event in itself. The commercial started out with a pretty young girl counting flower petals as she plucked them from a daisy. Just as she reached 10 the picture shifted to an armada of unmanned naval vessels. An authoritative voice interrupted with a count-down sequence in anticipation of a nuclear explosion. As a mushroom cloud engulfed the ships intermittent flashes of the young girl appeared on the screen.

Hall awarded the title of the funniest political commercial to California's former Gov. Brown who lost in a reelection bid to none other than Ronald Reagan. The ad concluded as such, "This year he wants to play governor. Are you willing to pay the cost of admission?" The commercial was reminiscent of campaign jokes about Reagan's acting career during the 1980 presidential elections.

Prof helps Olympic equestrian teams

By LINDA ROWLAND
Reporter

A Texas A&M veterinarian who worked with the 1984 Olympic equestrian teams at Los Angeles this summer said he felt the Olympics were a success in many ways.

Dr. Manuel Thomas Jr., D.V.M., told about 100 members of the TAMU Horseman's Association Tuesday evening he felt fortunate to have had the opportunity to associate with his colleagues from other countries.

"I was able to help put my country in good light," he said. Thomas said he was the only veterinarian at the equestrian Olympics

who also is a teacher.

"Over the years, it will be most important that I can share my experiences with the students and with the vet school," Thomas said.

Thomas, a faculty member at the Texas A&M Department of Veterinary Public Health, worked as a volunteer with the Olympic Veterinary Commission from July 19 to Aug. 14.

As host country, the United States provided the commission, which consisted of veterinarians serving all branches of the equestrian competition — the show jumping and dressage at Santa Anita racetrack and the three-day event at Fairbanks Ranch.

This Olympics featured the most

hours ever televised of the equestrian events. About 60 hours of show jumping and dressage were transmitted to Europe, Thomas said.

The veterinarian said these Olympics were unusual because no riders were seriously injured and no catastrophic accidents — so common to the sport — occurred.

"We were very fortunate," he said. With as many as 22 veterinarians strategically located, two hospitals on call and an X-ray unit at Santa Anita as well as being under close scrutiny of the Humane Society and the Federation Equestre Internationale, Thomas described the equestrian events as "precisely run."

Most horses arrived in aluminum crate-like stalls, were rigorously examined, and were put in quarantine for a few days before being admitted into the games, Thomas said.

The Federation Equestre Internationale, of which Britain's Prince Phillip is president, even requires horses to have extremely specific passports. Up to every hair swirl is documented to avoid mistakes, Thomas said.

The Veterinary Commission also drug tested, ran soundness checks and aided competitors — from any country — requesting help, Thomas said.

Heldenfels talks on deteriorating structures

By KAREN BLOCH
Reporter

The problem of the deterioration of roads, bridges and sewerage systems in the United States will have to be addressed soon, H.C. Heldenfels said Tuesday.

"The need to rebuild the nation's infrastructures will be met," Heldenfels told more than 280 students at a meeting of the T.R. Holleman Student Chapter of the Associated General Contractors.

"It (the need) will be met not only because of a need to protect the health and safety of the citizens, but because the nation's economic growth depends upon it," he said.

Heldenfels, president of The Associated General Contractors in 1982, presented a film dealing with the problem of substandard structures. The film was composed of news clips from various networks.

According to the film, the cost of repair and renewal of infrastructures could be as high as \$775 mil-

lion dollars. The film gave various examples of deteriorating bridges, roads and water systems.

For example, in one Pennsylvania town, a bridge is unable to bear the weight of a school bus and its passengers together. Students must get off the bus and cross the bridge on foot.

"We know that in 50 percent of our communities the waste-water systems are working at capacity and just can't take any more," Heldenfels said.

"Not meeting our nation's highway needs," Heldenfels said, "could, by 1995, cause an accumulated reduction in the gross national product of \$355 billion, a reduction in the number of employed workers by more than 2.5 million and price increases.

"There is a growing realization that investment in all types of construction, including public works, accelerates our economy. The construction industry is a catalyst of economic well-being.

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