

The Marlboro Story

How One of America's Most Popular
Filter Cigarettes Got That Way

BY LEO BURNETT

Judging by the mail and the number of times Marlboro comes up in magazine and newspaper stories, there seems to be so much interest in Marlboro cigarettes that I have been encouraged to write this piece.

The story starts in 1954. There were indications that substantial numbers of smokers were starting to switch to filter cigarettes. The Philip Morris people had an unusually fine filter. They had a blend of tobaccos that in consumer tests had proved itself quite superior in flavor to other filter cigarettes of the day.

They also had a radically new type of cigarette package called the "Flip-Top Box." It looked like a regular cigarette package but it was firm so the cigarettes wouldn't crush, even when a construction worker put them in his pants pocket.

Naming the Baby

The first thing their new baby needed was a name, and cigarette names are hard to come by. Finally they decided to give it a name they already had, "Marlboro." But this was the name of a totally different kind of cigarette than the one they wanted to sell. What's more, Philip Morris

had been putting it out since 1924. It was an extremely mild cigarette liberally laced with Turkish tobaccos. It came both with an ivory tip and a red "beauty tip." Many women smoked it and it was rather widely thought of as a lady's cigarette.

It came in this package:



So there they were. They had a perfectly good name, but they needed to make it the name of an entirely different kind of cigarette.

In tackling the problem, our advertising agency had the benefit of some very thorough research by Edmo Roper and that of the Philip Morris

research people. The new filter cigarette came in a package that looked like this:



As a first step, a group of us went down to Richmond, Virginia, where the new Marlboros were being made. Excepting a bakery, we had never seen a place that looked so clean or smelled so good. We were equally impressed by the research laboratories. Here we found a large staff of doctors of this and that using an amazing lot of scientific equipment to analyze tobacco, filters, and smoke itself.

This visit convinced us that Marlboro was a very good cigarette made with a great deal of care and con-

science. But it didn't solve the problem for us.

The first temptation was to go overboard with advertising that featured the "Flip-Top Box," the first real change in cigarette packaging in 38 years. It not only kept the cigarettes in good shape right down to the twentieth one, but, when empty, it was dandy for carrying fishhooks, stray buttons, and all sorts of things. But people don't smoke boxes, and everybody decided that it was what was *inside* the box that counted most. So we turned to Elmo Roper's research.

What the Research Told Us.

When we combined the research findings with common sense and experience, two points of special significance seemed to emerge:

1. People regarded the old ivory-tipped Marlboro as sissy. (That's the way it had been advertised—"America's luxury cigarette"—in a very plush atmosphere.)

2. Many regular smokers at that time tended to regard all filter cigarettes as slightly effeminate.

The new Marlboro wasn't this kind of a cigarette at all. It had a flavor you could get hold of and roll around in your mouth. There was nothing sissy about it.



First Marlboro Man Ad

It didn't take any motivational research or psychological seance to decide that the best way to sell the new Marlboro was to present it for what it really was, a filter cigarette with a full, honest flavor that could satisfy a man who was a regular smoker. In other words, a man's filter.

The Marlboro Cowboy

We asked ourselves what was the most generally accepted symbol of masculinity in America, and this led quite naturally to a cowboy.

The next natural question was: "If a cowboy were talking about the flavor, what would he say?"

This led to the phrase, "Delivers the goods on flavor."

The new Marlboro was made from a special and exclusive blend, so we called it a "recipe," which is exactly what it is.

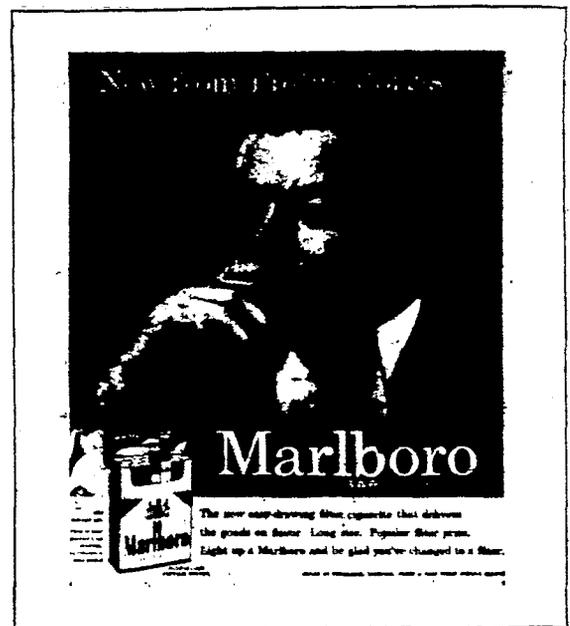
It seemed desirable also to let people know the name of the new Marlboro's respected maker. This led to the line, "New from Philip Morris" and this appeared in all introductory advertising.

The advertising first broke in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. The public responded spontaneously and in a big way.

Machines Flown from England

The new Flip-Top Box required special and very intricate machinery, made only by a company in England, which at that time enjoyed the engineering collaboration of Vickers, Ltd., of jet airplane fame. To keep pace with the sudden and overwhelming demand, extra machines were flown over from England as fast as they could be manufactured.

So far so good, but obviously we couldn't keep on showing cowboys forever, although they



First Tattoo Ad

could be repeated from time to time.

This led to another idea . . . close-up photographs of "regular guys." We shunned slick professional models, so familiar in cigarette advertising, as well as testimonials. Among our own friends and acquaintances, however, we found men who typified what has been referred to as "masculine confidence."

One of the big problems of an advertiser is to set himself apart from his competitors. This led to the tattoo, which was inscribed on the hands and wrists of the "Marlboro men" with indelible ink in a ballpoint pen at the time they were photographed. It seemed to be engaging to the men and women with whom these ads were tested in personal interviews. It seemed also to reinforce the masculine personality of the advertising and the brand.

People told us, "This man looks successful and sophisticated but rugged, and as though he might have had interesting experiences."

The general response among both men and women was, "He is the kind of person you would notice across a crowded room, and I would be interested in meeting him."

Months later our feeling about the story-telling quality of the tattoo was confirmed when we ran across a remark attributed to Jack London. He

is reported as saying, in effect, "Follow any man with a tattoo and you will find a romantic and adventurous past."

Anyway, the public quickly took to the sophisticated, successful-looking but rugged Marlboro Man. More and more people tried the cigarette, found a flavor they had been looking for and became regular smokers of the brand. Marlboro quickly took its place as one of America's leading filter cigarettes.

Although the advertising showed nothing but men, women took to the cigarette, too. Later this led a writer, aptly, though rather ambiguously, to call Marlboro "the cigarette designed for men that women like."

Several months after the introduction, a television writer came up with a song which goes, "You get a lot to like with a Marlboro—filter—flavor—flip-top box." This telegraphed the story and it quickly caught the public's fancy.

The "Tar Derby"

In the summer of 1957 the cigarette business was shaken by what is now referred to as the "Tar Derby."

This warfare as to who has the most effective or "best" filter in terms of tar and nicotine delivery as measured in milligrams, of course, is still continuing.

Various testing methods are employed and, whatever method is finally agreed upon by the Federal Trade Commission, now working on the problem in collaboration with leading tobacco companies, much depends on the habits of the individual smoker . . . how much he smokes, how fast he smokes, etc. It is generally



Warning to readers: this is the material in an unfinished filter before it is cured. So don't try to stuff out the filter of a Marlboro in your pocket. You can't.

conceded, however, that Philip Morris is a leader in this field of research which it pioneered some 25 years ago. By any known standards of measurement, Marlboro has one of America's most effective filters, and increasing millions of well-informed people are accepting it as such.

Marlboro's now famous filter is demonstrated, not with charts, but with what we call the "Filter Flower." This shows the copious amount of cellulose acetate, widely accepted as one of the most effective filtering materials known, in the filter of just one Marlboro cigarette, fluffed out in the shape of a flower. (Milligram data showing the position of Marlboro in relation to other cigarettes, of course, have been widely publicized.)

Naturally this filter has been gradually improved to provide increasingly effective filtration but it is still a filter which, as has been said in the ads, "doesn't get between you and the flavor."

In the meantime the "recipe" itself has been improved in terms of lower tar and nicotine delivery, as well as flavor.

Presiding over this end of the business in Richmond is a southern gentleman by the name of Wirt Hatcher, a tobacco man of some 44 years' experience.

Now Better "Makin's"

Mr. Hatcher, in collaboration with Dr. Robert N. Dupuis, head of research, and his staff, have now come up with a most unusual combination of true tobacco flavor and filter effectiveness. As Mr. Hatcher puts it, "It has the same famous Marlboro flavor, but more of it, strained through one of the best darned filters you can get. If I weren't afraid of scaring off the women, I would say that it gives you all the relaxation of smoking a pipe."

He sums it all up with the phrase, better "makin's."

To distinguish this newest Filter Recipe, in combination with the improved filter, the little crest on the package is now gold instead of gray.

As you probably know, the new combination now comes both in the famous Flip-Top Box and in the new king-size Soft Pack, because some people prefer the "soft pack" (or "cup" pack, as it is known in the trade).

Throughout this experience we have

been impressed with certain things about smokers, smoking and the attitude of the Philip Morris people.

Although it is difficult today to find a home without ashtrays, many people choose not to smoke.

Those who do smoke do so for various conscious or unconscious reasons. You hear them say they smoke for relaxation, relief from tensions, for sociability and companionship, as a reward (after sinking a ten-foot putt, for example), because a cigarette just plain tastes good after a cup of coffee, or for dozens of other reasons.

Marlboro is made for them.

The Language of a Brand

Outside the clothes and jewelry you wear, a cigarette package is your most frequently exposed possession. Every time you expose it, it says something about you.

Marlboro says, we believe, that while you want a highly effective filter and a mild combination of the world's finest tobaccos, you don't smoke just because of habit but you know and appreciate good tobacco flavor.

Philip Morris does not urge anybody to smoke but takes the position that if you do smoke, particularly if you smoke for flavor rather than strictly from habit, and want one of the best filters to boot, Marlboro is made especially for you.

It is not necessary that you have a romantic past or be able to lick your weight in wildcats. If you appreciate good smoking, that's enough.



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NOTE: Leo Burnett, who was requested to make this report, is Chairman of Leo Burnett Company, Inc., Chicago, an advertising agency.