

# Multi Sponsors Signal Beginning Of End Of Radio's Golden Age

*“T-U-M-S..... yes, Tums for the tummy.”*

*-- Don Wilson*

Lincoln, Me. (DG)—

The subject of this article is based from an E Mail I received concerning another article I wrote. He stated the product I wrote about didn't sponsor the program at the particular date of the broadcast I mentioned in the article. To make a long story short, he was right--- **to a point!** The product in question didn't sponsor the program at the date of the broadcast--- it was actually 1 of 3 completely different products from different companies that sponsored the program. This commercial package was listed in radio books and magazines under the “**Multi Sponsors**” label.

When the 1950's began, the idea of Multi Sponsors wasn't a new concept. There were some radio programs during the 1940's that successfully used more than one sponsor. For example, the 30-minute **BREAKFAST IN HOLLYWOOD** had 2 different sponsors in 2 15-minute segments. **Procter & Gamble** (for *Ivory Flakes*) sponsored the first 15 minutes of the program, and **Kellogg's Pep** and other **Kellogg's** cereals sponsored the second segment.

When **ARTHUR GODFREY TIME** was attracting numerous sponsors, the program was also sectioned off into 15-minute segments for each sponsor. Once again, this setup worked well, although every now and then, Arthur Godfrey would only mention the product he was selling instead of doing one of his famous commercials.

Overall, this practice proved successful and eventually be used for many daytime half hour television programs well into the 1960's.

Getting back to radio, there was good news and bad news concerning the use of Multi Sponsors. We'll begin with the bad news. It was used frequently when network radio as the listeners knew it was dying a slow, painful death during the 1950's. During this time, many major radio stars and major sponsors were leaving radio for television. To make matters worse, the listening audience was also dwindling at an alarming rate.

As bleak an outlook as what I have described, there was some good news about Multi Sponsors. For the diehard radio listeners, the Multi Sponsors were on hand to sponsor most of the remaining programs on network radio for the remainder of the golden age.

Now that you are familiar with Multi Sponsors, what were the products and how were the commercials presented on the air? Some products were established radio sponsors in their heyday, while others were brand new products.

As for how the commercials were presented, some radio commercials of the 1950's were done live, while many others were transcribed. The commercials were informative and uneventful. Music and

musical jingles were used a lot--- and it didn't hurt to have famous celebrities of that era giving their endorsement of the product to the radio listeners. Here's an example of the celebrity endorsement style of advertising.



As you already know, ***Tums*** was (and still is) specially made “**For The Tummy.**” When you really think of it, the commercials for ***Tums*** during the 1950's was really a stroke of genius by the advertising agency for ***Lewis-Howe*** (the makers of ***Tums***). For their celebrity, Don Wilson was hired as the ***Tums*** commercial spokesman. Needless to say, Wilson was one of the best and most popular radio announcers in the business, but he would also be the perfect spokesman to sell the antacid. If you're a fan of ***THE JACK BENNY PROGRAM***, you already know that Jack Benny kidded Wilson mercilessly for having a large stomach. With that thought in mind, it made sense for Wilson to sell ***Tums For The Tummy*** on the air. ■

In addition to Don Wilson, the listeners heard famous stars like Gisele MacKenzie, Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy, Mary Margaret McBride, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Frankie Laine, Mona Freeman, Mel Tormé, Dennis James, Fibber McGee & Molly, and others doing their part in selling products on the air.

The comedy team of Bob & Ray were also very successful in selling products during the final years of radio's golden age. Although the duo presented some commercials seriously, Bob Elliott and Ray Goulding were best known for using their brand of offbeat humor and an array of zany characters in their

commercial presentations. It proved so successful, Bob & Ray continued to present radio commercials well into the modern radio era.

Now that you know who did the selling, what were the new and established products that were sold under the Multi Sponsors label? In addition to ***Tums***, there is an impressive list of established radio sponsors. There were familiar names like ***Wheaties, Kix, Anacin, Chesterfield, Ford, Sweetheart Soap, Quaker Oats, Ipana, Lava, Fitch Shampoo, Wildroot Cream-Oil, Camel, Bromo Quinine, Kellogg's All-Bran, BiSoDoL Powder, Barbasol Brushless, Kool, Campana Products, Pabst Blue Ribbon, Bayer Aspirin, Shinola, Philip Morris***, and many others.

There is also an impressive list of new products that participated as Multi Sponsors on the radio. Some of the rookie products either had long runs on the market, or are now longtime favorite brands. This list consists of ***Prom Home Permanent, White Rain Shampoo, Brylcreem, Kent, Clorets, "Ennds" Chlorophyll Tablets, Winston, Dristan Decongestant Tablets, Brisk Fluoride Tooth Paste, Glamorene Liquid Upholstery Cleaner, Sta-Puf, Imperial Margarine, Dial Shampoo, Newport, Paper Mate Pens, Marlboro, Alpine, Barbasol Presto Lather, Philip Morris Commander, Mentholatum Deep Heat(ing) Rub, 4 Way Cold Tablets, Salem, Candettes Throat Lozenges, Fritos Corn Chips***, and many others.

One of the more notable, but not necessarily successful rookie products to take part was the legendary **Edsel**. The beleaguered car wasn't too popular then, but it has achieved considerable popularity today--- although it hasn't been made for decades. There are **Edsel Clubs** around the United States; several **Edsel** Internet web sites; and for anyone lucky enough to own one, the price of a mint condition **Edsel** can run into a lot of money.

As I stated before, Multi Sponsors helped to prolong radio's golden age--- although it was hanging on by a thread. The only casualty was the end of the close association of sponsor and program. For longtime radio listeners, it was strange to hear **Kellogg's All Bran** and **Sta-Puf** sponsoring **MA PERKINS** instead of **Oxydol**; **Camel** and **Bromo Quinine** sponsoring **GANGBUSTERS** instead of **Waterman Pens**; and **Tums** and **Dial Shampoo** sponsoring **FIBBER McGEE & MOLLY** instead of **Johnson's Wax**. By losing their longtime sponsors, the listed programs and others like them also lost a part of their identities. However, the bottom line would be these products and other Multi Sponsors kept the programs on the air for as long as they could. For the diehard radio listeners, that was all that mattered.

Shampoo this diamond sparkle  
into your hair with new  
**DIAL SHAMPOO**

No other shampoo gives  
this glorious Dial beauty  
-- yet leaves your hair  
so easy to manage!

You see dazzling results after a Dial Shampoo --  
the natural brilliance of your hair comes shining  
through because it's so clean. Wouldn't it be excit-  
ing to shampoo a diamond sparkle into your hair?

Only Dial Shampoo gives  
this complete shampoo  
because only Dial contains  
Dial Shampoo.

You get a complete shampoo with new  
Dial Shampoo that you've never seen  
add to your ordinary shampoo. Be-  
cause Dial Shampoo contains a new  
beauty ingredient, Dial Shampoo, it  
gives your hair clean, shining results.  
And your hair is so clean after a Dial  
Shampoo it has a diamond sparkle!  
That's like the automobile sparkle  
look -- it's so easy to see.

Dial  
Shampoo