

Reflecting on success is pleasurable for all of us. The introduction of Sophia marked one of the most successful launches of a women's fragrance in the past few years. Winner of 3 Fragrance Foundation Awards in the categories of fragrance, packaging and advertising, Sophia has established itself as a market leader and is recorded as one of Coty's most memorable achievements. Of all the people intimately involved in bringing this fragrance to market, Donald Flannery heads the list.

Mr. Flannery began his career in the beauty industry as a trainee at Revlon approximately 25 years ago. After a ten year period with Revlon, he joined Yardley of London, until his present association with Coty. Don was appointed President of Coty in November 1975.

Born in Brooklyn, he received a Bachelor of Science Degree from the College of The Holy Cross. He did graduate work in Marketing at Syracuse University. Before entering the beauty industry, he was signed by the Cincinnati Reds Baseball organization and did a brief stint in the minors.

Mr. Flannery is a Director of the Fragrance Foundation, a member of the Board of Directors of the Fashion Institute of Technology, a Board Member of Clear Pool Camp, and President of the Board of Trustees of the Coty American Fashion Critics' Award. In 1979 Don was the recipient of the coveted "Golden Apple Award," sponsored by the cosmetic industry for the benefit of the March of Dimes. Mr. Flannery will tell "The Story Behind the Launch of Sophia."

The Story Behind the Launch of Sophia

**By Donald Flannery
President
Coty USA, Pfizer Inc.
New York, NY**

In the mid 1970s, we looked at the fragrance business and found that the female business was exploding with lifestyle fragrances, designer fragrances, and we were naturally looking for entry points.

We mounted six intensive market research studies. The purposes of these studies were to evaluate lifestyles, evaluate tastes, to see where

the American woman was going, what her values were, what her ideals were and her ideas. And, of course, we got back a wealth of information.

The Idea

In the midst of all this information, in the area of admiration one name kept cropping up. The Martin-Landey Agency had courage to suggest

1982 Perfumers Symposium—Flannery

Sophia Loren as a spokeswoman because in the past the entries of fragrances keyed to celebrities had not received particularly great measures of success.

When the idea was first voiced to us, there was a great deal of hesitancy. Especially we wondered how it would be when we walked up into the Ivory Tower of our fine parent organization Pfizer and said, "We have just signed Sophia." Nevertheless we searched and researched, we matched the Sophia Loren name and image against other celebrity names, other movie stars and others from other walks of life—sports women, women in business—names that would bring immediate identity.

In all of the tests and studies we did, Sophia was either one or two. She emerged particularly strongly when we probed more deeply using the words believability, credibility, whom do they admire; her scores went right off the chart. So we were convinced that this magnificent woman did not just have a veneer of recognition from her movie activities, but had emerged in the consciousness of women as a beautiful, sensuous, respected, sensitive, real person.

The Contact

Our initial contacts were with Sophia and Carlo. I will not forget that long and apprehensive flight to Paris when we went to discuss the marriage of Sophia and Coty. Frankly, I can tell you it was laborious and filled with many, many meetings, but it went very, very well. Fortunately, Sophia had a warm spot in her heart for Coty because both she and her mother had used some Coty products and she remembers giving

her grandmother some Coty. So the little nostalgia made it easier.

The Product

When the product came back, the work was at hand selecting a fragrance, and I suppose we did it in the normal, but we think more intense manner than most companies do. Through our perfumer, Howard Kennedy, we contacted some of the leading essential oil houses. Submissions were made and the gradual process of selection and elimination finally left a small group of fragrances which were sent out to consumers for panel testing, for topnote, dry down, and wear. Finally, the emotional gut decision had to be made and the fragrance was selected after months and months of testing.

Then the package, the bottles, the packs, the outer cartons were developed. We feel the use of rich red and burgandy represents the earthiness, the sensuality and the warmth of Sophia.

The Launch

We launched Sophia in October 1980. Prior to the launch, in May 1980, we held a sales conference in Las Vegas, Nevada, with all of our salespeople and our office people. All the salespeople were introduced to the fragrance and to the packaging and to the theme. It was my unfortunate position standing at the podium to say that this beautiful woman who was carrying the name of this great fragrance, because of previous commitments, could not be with us at that sales meeting.

I said that it wasn't much of a substitute, but

1981-82 ASP Officers:
(1st row) Vera Cook, Director; Simone Fedak, President; James Bell, President-elect; Rayda Vega, Secretary, (2nd row) John Porter, Chairman of the Board; Mark Banwer, Director; Edward Schwartz, Vice-President; (3rd row) Christian Baude, Director; and Guido Cianciolo, Treasurer.

Photo by C. Baude

we did have a personal message from Sophia and I asked for the house lights to go down. Between 300 and 350 people sat in total darkness. A sudden spotlight pierced the darkness and there at the other podium across the stage was that stunning woman, Sophia Loren. The welcome of the sales staff lasted for over five minutes. She was overwhelmed.

Sophia Loren is timid and shy, believe it or not. We had her hidden in another hotel and the element of surprise was complete. The enthusiasm was magnetic. After many, many minutes of thunderous applause, and we got a little order into the room, she said she was happy to be there and that she was overwhelmed by the great reception. She just loved the crowd and loved the reception and stayed up there for twenty minutes and just chatted with them. Instead of leaving the next day as she had planned, she stayed for the whole meeting. At the closing banquet, the highlight of our meetings, we give out awards and the top award is entry in the President's Club for the top five salespeople. No one knows who they are until this night. They are bedecked with a blue blazer with a crest that says President's Club Maximus. This is an honor much sought after, but never like that night because the jackets were put on by Sophia Loren.

After that meeting, we had a sales force of 165 people charging out to the retailers and selling with gusto the great Sophia line.

How did we reach the public? In the first four months, we spent \$4½ million advertising Sophia in measured media, primarily television, no radio, and support with good advertising in magazines.

One of the qualities of Sophia is that she is so dominating, her charisma is so magnetic, that the advertising agency says, "What a delight to have someone that conjures up immediate awareness the second her image is on that tube, people are fixed because they want to watch Sophia." This causes a dilemma because we also want the audience to watch and recognize the product in the advertising. We want this tremendous spokeswoman in the proper perspective with the fragrance and the message.

Our first commercial ran in fall 1980 and throughout 1981 and for the first three months of 1982. In our post-introduction studies, we found that the fragrance was identified with nighttime and special occasion use. This is an area in which we feel we could gain strength. So our second commercial shows Sophia in more casual settings. We hope that this will identify the fragrance as being more appropriate for daytime or casual wear use.

In our first four months after the launch, we shipped wholesale over \$9 million and that is considered a highly successful launch. The proof of the pudding, however, is in year two. In

1981, I am delighted to say that we went over \$15 million with Sophia and had a splendid year.

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I do not view Sophia as a lifestyle fragrance. My personal belief is that lifestyle fragrances have reached their crest and have plateaued and may even be on the down trend. I say this because lifestyle fragrances are, by nature, short lived and have a short life cycle. It becomes uneconomical for a firm to invest up-front money in packaging and fragrance research to salute a happenstance that will be with us two, three or four years.

I don't think many companies can do that when the normal progression for launching a major fragrance properly is that the first year of launch is a loss; the second year is a loss or a break even; the third year is at least a break even; and finally the fourth year the company makes money. It is not a very sound or wise investment if you start making money in the fourth year when the life cycle is going down.

Sophia Loren is a legend and will remain a

Jean Baer of Baromatic with Peter Blechinger and Guido Cianciolo, both of Alpine

legend. We have molded the fragrance Sophia and positioned it not to be a lifestyle, but to be a way of life. And in that way, we hope that it will emerge and endure as a classic.

We just got the A. C. Nielson audit of movement of fragrances for the January/February 1982 period and found that Sophia had increased its share of market from a year ago by 57%. Sophia is alive and well and prospering. I would like to feel that about our industry that I know we all love whatever segment of it we serve. I feel that the fragrance industry is very much alive and can be very, very well if we all forget about sharing glumness with each other and get about resourcefulness by coming out with better ideas, better products and more innovations.

We at Coty are not pulling the plug on advertising. Our dollars are wedded for the balance of this year, and we are going to spend them. In

1982 on Sophia alone, we will spend over \$6 million in measured media.

John O'Toole, one of the citadels of the advertising industry, was confronted recently at some lecture with "all advertising does sell is products that people don't really need." And he answered, "That's probably true because after all, the only things people really need are clothing, food and shelter, but the things that make their life richer and fuller are the things they really want."

We are lucky our fragrances make our lives and our customer's lives richer and broader and fuller.

They used to say that the fragrance and cosmetic industries were recession proof. Obviously, that is not true. But I think we are definitely more recession resistant than many, many other industries. After all, a new creative fragrance and a new marketing strategy do not require great capital expenditures. We do not have to build a new plant or put new smokestacks on our existing plants. All we need is the enthusiasm and the devotion that our great industry built.

I recently watched *Easter Parade* on television. There were the lyrics of Irving Berlin written in 1933 at the bottom of the depression when people did not know where their next meal was coming from. He said, "In your Easter bonnet, with all the frills upon it." Well, there are not many bonnets around today to lift the spirits of people, but there are a lot of great fragrance ideas that can be marketed. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we, with our small contribution to the gross national product, could be the spearhead to say, "The devil with gloom—let's get about our business" and deliver to the American male and female riches of life that they can afford so they can become innovative and rally up this country to where it belongs.

Jack Nagler, Jerry Kaufman, Julian Dorsky, and Kurt Kulka

Albert Wolkowski of Fritzsche D&O, Arnold Manheimer of J. Manheimer, Henri Bour of Mero, and Anton van Ouwerkerk of IFF.