Chapter 3

Smokey Bear

A More Complicated Character Than His Image Depicts

Smokey Bear ranks alongside Santa Claus and Mickey Mouse as one of the most recognizable icons of our time. . . . Kids love him.

—*Ad Council,* Public Service Advertising That Changed a Nation

In this region, Smokey dolls have been hanged and nailed to posts, posters bearing his image have been riddled with bullet holes, and he has commonly been characterized as a vicious and despotic land thief.

—*Jake Kosek,* Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico

On a sunny Friday in August 2007, Scott Murray stood before the Ad Council's Campaign Review Committee. At ad agency Draftfcb, the thirty-five-year-old creative director had promoted Taco Bell, State Farm Insurance and Doubletree Hotels (he is now a creative director at R&R Partners in Los Angeles). But none of that work matched the opportunity now before him. The U.S. Forest Service's Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention (CFFP) program wanted a new Smokey Bear campaign. Murray would have the chance to help create the advertising for this important image.

As the longest-running public service advertising campaign in U.S. history, Smokey is embedded in America's cultural zeitgeist. He has his own zip code, postage stamp, website, Facebook page, and school lesson plan. His mail once exceeded more than a thousand letters a day, and he counts more than ninety-three thousand friends on Facebook. His image is protected by an act of

Congress, and he remains one of the most popular characters ever produced by the ad industry.

Three out of four adults recognize him, and he was once second only to Santa Claus among the nation's favorite characters. Smokey has been promoted by Alvin and the Chipmunks, the Grateful Dead, Aretha Franklin, and Sammy Davis Jr. Actors such as Gregory Peck, John Wayne, and Rodney Dangerfield have sung his praises. Since Smokey debuted in 1944, the amount of land burned because of wildfires dropped from an average of 22 million acres to less than 8 million per year.[1] Many consider Smokey one of the Ad Council's most successful creations.

Smokey is also a symbol of conflict. Critics argue that his message promotes contradictory land use policies: it urges citizens both to protect forests from human-caused fires so everyone can enjoy the wonders of nature, and to save trees so that the wood can be harvested to benefit America's economy. Smokey is simultaneously a beloved icon of many children and their parents, a loathed symbol of colonialism to some American Indians and Chicanos who believe the government took their land (according to Jake Kosek's research), and a character who communicates the wrong message, according to a growing audience of amateurs and experts who believe controlled fires are actually good for forests.

The U.S. Forest Service, the National Association of State Foresters, and the Ad Council—the three members who make up the CFFP coordinating committee—are aware of the criticisms, but they maintain that Smokey does not represent official Forest Service policies. While some audiences consider Smokey a symbol of how the federal government addresses land use, the CFFP argues that Smokey's message focuses solely on wildfire prevention education. The Forest Service believes Smokey also protects watersheds, wildlife habitats, and homes threatened by fires, and it insists that Smokey has never said that all fires are bad for forests, just dangerously out-of-control ones.

The number of people in the Ad Council's conference room the day Murray presented his work, typically about ten for such a meeting, had swelled to forty, reflecting the excitement associated with the new Smokey advertising campaign. Nina DiSesa, then chairman of the McCann Erickson ad agency, headed the committee. An advertising legend herself, DiSesa had become the first female executive creative director of McCann's flagship New York office in 1994. She later presided over the well-known MasterCard "Priceless" campaign.

For "creatives" such as Murray, appearing before this Ad Council committee represented a rare chance to meet and work with giants such as DiSesa.

Murray opened with a pitch for a new Smokey print ad, and his audience was hooked. The goal of the campaign was to reintroduce Smokey to Americans as a hip bear who understood the modern world and still had a relevant message to share. What better way to do that than give him a profile—done in *Vanity Fair* style—to accompany the TV spot? Copying the questions that appeared in the monthly profile at the back of the magazine, readers would learn that Smokey's idea of perfect happiness was "a day fishing in the wilderness, followed by a nap under a shady, towering oak tree, hat over my eyes, no wildfires to worry about." When asked on what occasion he might lie, Smokey answered, "The only lying I do involves hibernation."

Relieved at the committee's welcoming response, Murray turned to the thirty-second TV spot. The concept: Smokey is always watching you. On the three screens in the room, a carved Smokey statue—the one present at many national parks and based on the work of artist Rudy Wendelin—appeared behind people about to commit a careless act that could cause a wildfire. To Murray, it seemed like only ten seconds into his description of the spot when DiSesa interrupted. "I hate it," Murray recalled her saying, unable to tolerate an ad in which Smokey did not move or express emotion. "What else do you have?"

Murray, reeling from the committee's sudden change, could only talk about his other idea since no other presentation was ready: in this scenario, people would step into Smokey's shoes as they admonished others for potentially starting a fire. Fortunately, the alternative was enough. With orders from the committee to develop it, the result would be the 2008 campaign called "Get Your Smokey On."

Preserving Nature's "Great Solemn Cathedral"

To understand Smokey's complicated history, it's necessary to start with a pivotal May 1903 Yosemite mountain camping trip that President Theodore Roosevelt took with naturalist and Sierra Club founder John Muir.

While lying prone on a pile of pine needles and surrounded by giant sequoia trees, Roosevelt learned why preserving forests needed to be a part of future land management policies. Staring at the trees, he felt like he was "lying in a great solemn cathedral, far vaster and more beautiful than any built by the hands of man."[2]

Over the four-day hike, Muir, with unlimited access to Roosevelt, explained the importance of preserving America's parks and forests in their pure state. This position would be combined with "the greatest good for the greatest number" approach favored by Roosevelt's good friend and chief of the Division of Forestry, Gifford Pinchot, to create the Forest Service's mix of preservation and management in its land policies.[3] It was likely the staggering beauty of his surroundings, even more than Muir's eloquence, that worked its magic on the president. Roosevelt delighted in the wild land he encountered, including the four inches of snow he found himself buried under after awakening one morning at Glacier Point. If Roosevelt considered the land "bully," as Edmund Morris described in his book *Theodore Rex*, the unexpected snow was "bullier."[4]

Muir did not emerge from the trip empty-handed. Roosevelt issued an immediate presidential order ceding the already well-developed Yosemite Valley back to the national park system and granting an extension of the California forest. The word "preservation" also appeared in Roosevelt's May 19, 1903, speech that he delivered in Sacramento immediately after the Yosemite trip. He said:

> Lying out at night under those giant Sequoias was lying in a temple built by no hand of man, a temple grander than any human architect could by any possibility build, and I hope for the preservation of the groves of giant trees simply because it would be a shame to our civilization to let them disappear. They are monuments in themselves. I ask for the preservation of the other forests on grounds of wise and far-sighted economic policy. I do not ask that lumbering be stopped at all. On the contrary, I ask that the forests be kept for use in lumbering, only that they be so used that not only shall we here, this generation, get the benefit for the next few years, but that our children and our children's children shall get the benefit. I ask that your marvelous natural resources be handed on unimpaired to your posterity. We are not building this country of ours for a day. It is to last through the ages.[5]

Roosevelt's words characterized the fundamental conflict that would permeate federal land use policy for generations to come. The land should be used to benefit the country's economic interests, yet also be preserved for the future

enjoyment of all citizens. It was a conflict that would pit rancher against tourist, and tree cutter against tree-hugging environmentalist.

To further understand how one cartoon bear's advertising messages would generate such disparate reactions, it's necessary to first explore the land management policies practiced by the federal Forest Service, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 gave the Forest Service authority to combine both preservation and management in its approach to the nation's land.[6] Pete Dunne, in his book *Prairie Spring*, defines the terms as follows: "Multiple use means hiking, hunting, bird watching, camping, gas and oil drilling, timber harvesting, and cattle grazing. Sustained yield means you can do what you want to do as long as the ecological integrity of the habitat is not diminished or destroyed."[7]

In the mid-nineteenth century, land dominated American thought in the form of manifest destiny—the idea that the United States had a God-given right to expand its territory. The phrase first appeared in the July/August 1845 edition of the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, where author John L. O'Sullivan, writing about the annexation of Texas, declared "the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our multiplying millions."[8] How to manage the land became a chief concern even before shots rang out at noon in Oklahoma on September 16, 1893, and the final acres were claimed in the last of America's great land rushes.

Manifest destiny brought unwelcome consequences. Concern about depletion of lumber and the need to preserve the forests gained greater attention in 1872, when Franklin B. Hough, a physician and statistician, was appointed to a New York state commission to study the necessity of a public forest park. His paper, "On the Duty of Governments in the Preservation of Forests," which called for stopping the destruction of trees and promoting reforestation, became the basis of a August 15, 1876, bill authorizing $2,000 for a forestry study.[9] Previous attempts at passing a version of the bill through the Public Lands Committee had failed. So a motion was made to transfer the bill as a rider to the Department of Agriculture's general appropriations bill. This move was significant because it foreshadowed the future 1905 shift of forestry matters from the Department of the Interior to Agriculture, where the Forest Service remains housed today.[10]

The Forest Reserve Act of 1891 authorized the government to designate public land as forest reserves.[11] To protect water supplies, President Benjamin Harrison set aside fifteen federal land reserves with more than 13 million acres, including the Yellowstone Forest Reserve. President Grover Cleveland created an additional thirteen reserves of 21 million acres. A bill signed by President William McKinley on June 4, 1897, authorized the U.S. Geological Survey to examine the forest reserves. No reservation could be established "except to improve and protect the forest within the reservation, or for the purpose of securing favorable conditions of water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of the citizens of the United States."[12] The secretary of the interior was directed to develop rules to protect the reserves, and the bill permitted the sale of mature or dead lumber.

Gifford Pinchot used his friendship with Teddy Roosevelt to broaden the government's management of public lands. The two had successfully kept control of the forests from "men they castigated as robber barons and plunderers of the public domain."[13] Preserving the land was considered radical in the eyes of those such as William A. Clark, the Montana copper baron and U.S. senator who brought the railroad to southern Nevada; J. P. Morgan, who controlled the Northern Pacific Railroad; and E. H. Harriman, head of the Union Pacific Railroad. Like many of their powerful colleagues, all three were eager to gain riches from the final fruits of manifest destiny. Clark's attitude that he was above the law and bore no responsibility toward average citizens particularly irked Mark Twain. In a 1907 essay entitled "Senator Clark of Montana," Twain posited him as the essence of Gilded Age corruption: "He is as rotten a human being as can be found anywhere under the flag; he is a shame to the American nation, and no one has helped to send him to the Senate who did not know that his proper place was the penitentiary, with a ball and chain on his legs. To my mind he is the most disgusting creature that the republic has produced since [William 'Boss'] Tweed's time."[14]

When Pinchot met with Roosevelt in 1899, while the former Rough Rider was governor of New York, they agreed that "Americans had become much too shortsighted with the continent they now straddled. . . . In an eye blink, the great bounty had been exhausted; more than a billion acres had been given away to corporations, states, or private landowners to do with as they pleased."[15]

An assassin's bullet on September 6, 1901, took the life of President William McKinley and made Roosevelt, at forty-two, the nation's youngest president.

Although Roosevelt said publicly that little would change in his administration, his goal was to move the Republican Party away from big business to become what he saw as "a fairly radical progressive party."[16] In his first message to Congress, Roosevelt said, "The forest reserves should be set apart forever for the use and benefit of our people as a whole and not sacrificed to the short-sighted greed of a few."[17] To achieve this, he asked Pinchot to stay on as the country's forester and presidential advisor.

Through the use of executive decrees, Roosevelt got to work. Pelican Island in Florida became America's first wildlife refuge. When Roosevelt won the 1904 election, Congress passed the Transfer Act of 1905, which moved responsibility for the forests to the Department of Agriculture, changed the Bureau of Forestry to the U.S. Forest Service, and renamed the reserves national forests. Pinchot, as the Forest Service's first chief, now had control of 60 million acres. Together, Roosevelt and Pinchot would push an agenda of conservation.

In 1907 Roosevelt further expanded federally protected lands, despite an attempt by a rebellious Congress to eliminate the president's power to create more national forests in seven western states. When Congress added an amendment to a spending bill that would eliminate the president's authority to create new national forests without congressional approval, Roosevelt felt stymied.[18] He had one week to sign the bill, which was necessary to keep the government operating. Pinchot, however, felt emboldened. Why not spend the week protecting as much land as possible by creating more national forests that Roosevelt would add to the bill before signing it?

Pouring over maps of the seven states in question, Roosevelt was elated by his friend's plan. "Oh, this is bully," he exclaimed. "Have you put in the North Fork of the Flathead? Up there once I saw the biggest herd of black-tailed deer."[19] By week's end, 16 million acres of additional land had been declared national forests by executive decree. In just two years, Roosevelt, with the help of Pinchot, had tripled the amount of land in the national forest system to 180 million acres. Backed by Pinchot's army of forest rangers, conservation became the new buzzword.

Dismantling Roosevelt's Legacy

These successes, however, were fleeting. The Forest Service would barely survive the William Howard Taft presidency, which started in 1909. In the early days of Taft's administration, Roosevelt's foes in Congress pledged death to

the Forest Service by a thousand little cuts. The budget was slashed, causing mayhem among Pinchot's forest rangers: "As policemen, game wardens, rescuers and peacemakers, rangers were expected to organize and lead fire-fighting crews, build roads, negotiate grazing fees and timber sales contracts, direct reforestation and disease control projects and run surveys."[20] The pay cuts were crippling, and there were insufficient funds for roads, telephones, trails, or the hiring of fire patrols in advance of the coming wildfire season.

Worse, Pinchot, held over from the Roosevelt administration, now found himself at odds with his mentor John Muir. Muir thought conservation should mean preserving the land in its pure state, but Pinchot disagreed. His policy for how the Forest Service should operate rested on the core principle that "use was not contrary to conservation. Decisions on use would consider the needs of the local industries first."[21] Any conflicts would be resolved from the standpoint of "the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."[22]

Roosevelt may have handpicked Taft to carry on his legacy, but Taft, once in office, believed Roosevelt's conservation movement had gone too far. He fired Pinchot on January 7, 1910.[23] Roosevelt's enemies in Congress made plans to abolish the Forest Service. Their sharpened knives slashed the service's ability to publicize itself, making it nearly impossible to recruit new forest rangers. Senator Weldon Heyburn of Idaho, long a Roosevelt foe, said no further federal money should be spent on forests. Meanwhile, Taft quickly returned some of the land Roosevelt had protected to private interests.

Then nature intervened. In July of that year, a series of wildfires, started by electrical storms, erupted in the dry forests of Washington, Idaho, and Montana. Other fires, started for work-related reasons at logging, ranching, and railroad sites, were also spread by fierce winds over a three-day period. Up until then, fire protection chiefly had fallen to the forest rangers, since the states enacted few laws and allocated insufficient resources to address the issue. But the decimated Forest Service could do little to stop the wildfires from turning into a raging inferno in August. As eloquently told in Timothy Egan's book, *The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire That Saved America*, the fire consumed 3 million acres in two days, destroying a good part of towns such as Wallace, Idaho, and taking the lives of at least eighty-five, many of them firefighters.[24]

Pinchot used the fire as an opportunity to attack the enemies of conservation. He called people like Senator Heyburn part of a group of "ironbound

reactionaries" with blood on their hands.[25] "The men in Congress like Heyburn who have made light of the efforts of the Forest Service to prepare itself to prevent such a calamity as this, have in effect been fighting on the side of the fires against the general welfare," Pinchot said. "If even a small fraction of the loss from the present fires had been expended in additional patrol and preventive equipment some or perhaps all of the loss could have been avoided."[26]

Although it was doubtful that anything could have stopped the fire, Pinchot used it to rouse support for the Forest Service and to lambaste Congress for the budget cuts. Roosevelt joined in, calling for an expanded Forest Service, a new crop of rangers to protect America's forests, and more land to be set aside for the enjoyment of future generations.

With public sentiment now favoring conservation, Pinchot was able to spearhead a movement that culminated in Congress passing the Weeks Act in early 1911, placing 20 million acres of eastern lands within the public land system. Forests in the Appalachians, the Great Smoky Mountains, New England, and southern Ohio would be added. The bill also allowed the federal government to purchase land to protect the headwaters of rivers and watersheds in the East, and called for federal, state, and private authorities to cooperate in preventing forest fires.[27] The Clarke-McNary Act in 1924, which provided money for controlling forest fires, further extended the authority of the Forest Service to buy timber-producing land.[28]

Nevertheless, Forest Service officials believed that more needed to be done to prevent forest fires. Addressing Americans directly, the Forest Service created a radio program, *Uncle Sam's Forest Rangers*, which debuted in 1932 on the NBC radio network as part of the "National Farm and Home Hour."[29] The program introduced listening audiences to two characters: an experienced ranger named Jim Robbins and his young protégé Jerry Quick, who had recently graduated from forestry school. When young Jerry forgot to break his match in two after lighting up a cigarette, he quickly learned the dangers of carelessness in the forest. Each weekly episode of the program, which lasted into the 1940s, showcased a different part of the forest ranger's job. The program also highlighted different Forest Service goals advocated by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. After FDR launched a Civilian Conservation Corps that would put a quarter of a million men to work in the forests ten days after his March 4, 1933, inauguration, an episode featuring the program appeared on the show that

September. The corps played an important role in combating forest fires, and program funds were used to buy more acres for national forests, build campgrounds, and establish trails.[30]

Even before Smokey Bear was created, the Forest Service would speak to the nation with forest fire prevention advertising messages that pushed the theme of protecting America's forests from the Axis powers. It was the threat to national economic and security interests that galvanized the War Advertising Council to create a forest fire prevention campaign. Preserving the forests for future generations was not the chief concern.

Another Enemy to Conquer

When a Japanese submarine surfaced off the coast of California during World War II on February 23, 1942, near Ellwood Beach, seven miles north of Santa Barbara concern about protecting the nation's forests intensified. As William Clifford Lawter Jr. writes in *Smokey Bear 20252: A Biography*, the ship was under orders to attack a coastal target and thus divert American warships northward. "Five nervous sailors scrambled on deck and fired a quick volley of almost two dozen five-inch shells," Lawter observes.[31] Nobody was injured, and damages, which included the loss of a shed owned by the Barnsdall-Rio Grande Oil Company, barely reached $500.[32]

But the psychological impact was enormous. This was the first wartime attack on the U.S. mainland. Threats to America's national security and critical lumber supply were now uppermost in the minds of government officials and business leaders alike. Ellen Earnhardt Morrison, writing in *Guardian of the Forest: A History of the Smokey Bear Program*, explains why lumber was considered so critical to the war effort:

> It is estimated that during World War II, our military forces used enough lumber to construct 9,500,000 average size houses (about one-fourth the number of family homes in the United States at that time).... The building of a "Liberty" ship required about 350,000 board feet of lumber. Any ship of 10,000-ton capacity needed 250,000 board feet of lumber and timber just to brace every load it transported. About 28,000 board feet went into building a PT boat, and a sub-chaser required 200,000 board feet for its foredecks, bulkheads,

> and other parts. High quality wood was used to make gunstocks, and every year of the war saw 50,000,000 board feet consumed for this purpose. When a soldier was shipped overseas, he was outfitted with supplies and equipment sent in packing crates. These crates used many more board feet of lumber.[33]

Human carelessness in forests was a grave concern even before the Japanese submarine attack. In 1941, the year America entered the war, 208,000 forest fires consumed 30 million acres of land. The Forest Service claimed that nine out of ten of these fires were caused by people and could have been prevented.[34] Preventing accidental fires became a top priority for William V. Mendenhall, the supervisor of Angeles National Forest in Southern California, who was appointed the forest defense coordinator for the area. To educate the public about how carelessness causes fires, Mendenhall and his fire prevention officer, Arnold B. Larson—a former newspaperman—asked advertising agencies to include fire prevention messages in their ad copy or to donate posters to the cause.[35]

Mendenhall addressed his April 28, 1942, letter to ad agencies around the country. The copy sent to Sigurd Larmon, president of Young & Rubicam, read, "We need your help in arousing the public to join us, as never before, in protecting America's 160 national forests. It's a big part of the job of defeating the Axis."[36] Mendenhall urged Larmon to use his agency to "hammer home, in newspaper, periodical and radio advertising, this year's extraordinary need for vigilant care with fire, matches and cigarettes in forest country."[37] In his telegraph response, Larmon referred Mendenhall to the newly formed Ad Council: "It is our considered judgment that your cause can be served more promptly and completely through this organization than through individual agencies."[38] In turn, the Ad Council recommended Don Belding, then head of the Los Angeles office of Lord & Thomas (which would later become Foote, Cone & Belding, and then Draftfcb) to help create the campaign.

Belding was ideally suited to take on a national fire prevention campaign. Within his office, which was a part of the Lord & Thomas Chicago-based firm run by advertising giant Albert Lasker, Belding handled the prestigious Sunkist (California Fruit Growers Exchange) account.[39] In his acceptance speech for president of the Pacific Coast Advertising Clubs, Belding told his audience: "It is advertising which makes free enterprise possible in the United States and

Canada. It is advertising which makes a solvent press possible and without a solvent press we cannot have a free press."[40]

Forest Fires: "Allies of the Axis"

Belding presented the first forest fire prevention campaign at a May 12, 1942, meeting of the Los Angeles County Conservation Association. The slogan was: "Careless Matches Aid the Axis—Prevent Forest Fires."[41] These words appeared below the "head of [a] Jap soldier (against forest fire background) holding [a] burning match to his face," according to a memo listing highlights of the campaign.[42] Fire prevention officer Larson of the Angeles National Forest described the poster of the Japanese soldier, featuring a menacing grin, to his superiors in Washington, D.C., as having "a power of evil magnetism that draws and binds attention."[43] Smokey would not appear in the campaign until 1944.

The Ad Council showed the campaign to Secretary of Agriculture Claude Wickard on May 18. The Forest Service would pay for the production of the posters, radio transcripts, movie trailers, and billboards at an estimated cost of $43,000.[44] But additional support was needed from industry to place newspaper and magazine ads nationwide. Belding had first proposed Kiwanis International as the sponsor of the program, but the Forest Service rejected the idea: "Kiwanis usually puts on a good opening show, but does not follow through on a long campaign such as this will have to be, since it is not believed they are equipped to do so."[45]

The Forest Service also believed that a national campaign was necessary to attract the support of big business: "If the Advertising Council program is not put on as a nation-wide campaign, we had better not have any campaign at all. Big companies all over the country, represented by the Advertising Council, will not come in on any sporadic local campaigns."[46]

Wickard liked the campaign.[47] The Forest Service assigned Richard Hammatt to direct the campaign and began preparations for a national announcement of the effort.[48] Hammatt, who had graduated from Harvard University's first forestry class in 1906, had served the Forest Service in California and Oregon. After leaving to become the executive officer of the California Redwood Association, he had returned to the service in 1933 to help organize President Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps.[49]

When Secretary Wickard launched the campaign on CBS's radio network on July 24, 1942, he told listeners that "destruction in our forests today by care-

lessness with fire is equivalent to sabotaging the nation's war program."[50] The announcement followed a July 16 letter to all the Forest Service's regional offices describing the role each office and ranger would have in the "greatest mass attack on the carelessly caused forest fire in the history of conservation."[51]

By September, problems with the campaign began surfacing. The Ad Council had created a new rule requiring all campaigns to have advertising coordinators, which forced Belding to find a corporate sponsor to fill the role he played on the campaign. When he suggested an executive from the Los Angeles Fruit Growers Exchange, Hammatt initially balked. In his September 12 reply to Belding, he wrote: "There are many owners of stumpage and manufacturers of lumber who are very suspicious that the Forest Service will use this Wartime Forest Fire Prevention campaign as a vehicle through which to preach public control of cutting practices on privately owned forest land, and there are members of the Forest Service who believe some of those owners and manufacturers might be glad to throw a spoke or two in the wheel of the . . . campaign undertaken in any large way by the Forest Service."[52]

Others questioned the campaign's theme. As in other early Ad Council campaigns, the ads pushed a patriotic theme. But the patriotic fervor embedded in the campaign's slogan, combined with the evil grin on the face of the Japanese soldier in the poster, resonated more with Americans living in the West, while Hitler seemed a greater threat to those in the eastern states.

In response to a questionnaire Hammatt circulated to regional foresters about the 1942 campaign, the California region office reported: "The criticism of this year's design was that the Jap head was more applicable to the West than nationwide, and that the slogan 'Careless Matches Aid the Axis' was too impersonal and did not bring home the fire problem to the individual citizen."[53] Foresters in the South agreed: "While the Jap face was an excellent symbol, it must be remembered that the Japs are somewhat far away to the people in the South while the Nazis are much closer. Pictures and mats possibly using a combination of the Nazi and Jap would be more effective."[54]

As a result, the faces of Hitler and Japanese prime minister Hideki Tōjō appeared on the 1943 poster, with a forest fire raging in the background. The slogan, "Our Carelessness, Their Secret Weapon," had won out against the Ad Council's proposed "Carelessness Is Treason." Some Forest Service officials objected to the word "treason" as being too forceful and possibly even dangerous.[55]

By 1944, with the war nearing an end, the Forest Service wanted the campaign to extend beyond a ceasefire, continuing to educate Americans about the need to prevent fires. The use of war-related scare tactics no longer applied, and Hammatt was eager for new material. Walt Disney's *Bambi*, a popular hit film after its 1942 release, inspired the idea of making a Disney poster for the fire prevention effort. Responding to the familiar fawn in the 1944 campaign, children and schoolteachers no longer found the campaign intimidating. In the poster, Bambi looked out at the audience with a cartoon rabbit and squirrel seated by his side. The slogan, which promoted a personal responsibility theme, said, "Please Mister, Don't Be Careless. Prevent Forest Fires."

Though well received, Bambi was not a permanent solution. Hammatt considered the Disney art "fine, but the information I get from all sources back here is that there always are too many strings to it to make it practicable for us as a basic design," he wrote in a letter to Foote, Cone & Belding on August 17, 1944.[56] He wanted a "good basic design 'a la Disney,'" and a squirrel emerged as one possibility. But a bear was considered more suitable. An earlier memo described a collective vision of what the bear should look like. Hammatt wrote: "Characterization (Disney manner?) of a (cub?) bear in a green (unburned) setting. Nose short (Panda type), color black or brown; expression appealing, knowledgeable, quizzical; perhaps wearing a campaign (or Boy Scout) hat that typifies the outdoors and the woods. A bear that walks on his hind legs; that can be shown putting out a warming fire with a bucket of water; dropping by parachute to a fire; reporting a fire by phone from a lookout; plowing a fire-line around a new-made clearing; building a campfire in the right place and way; carrying a rifle like G.I. Joes, etc."[57]

Hammatt also knew what he didn't want: "Do not simulate bears drawn by Cliff Berryman of the *Washington Star* (Teddy bears); used in Boy Scout publications; used by Piper Cub (airplane); the bear that symbolizes Russia; the bears on attached Forest Service bookmark."[58]

The assignment for drawing the bear was given to New York artist Albert Staehle. The Munich-born Staehle, who had emigrated to the United States at the age of fourteen, was a popular animal artist. He drew the "flop-eared cocker spaniel Butch on *Saturday Evening Post* covers."[59] His poster of a cow had inspired the Borden Company's Elsie the Cow.[60]

Staehle's interpretation of Hammatt's description resulted in a tender-looking bear pouring a bucket of water over a campfire. Published reports credit Hammatt for naming the bear Smokey, based perhaps on "Smokey Joe" Martin, the deceased assistant chief of the New York City fire department, who had been fearless in fighting fires.[61] Hammatt and his team added jeans and a hat to Staehle's naked bear, and the icon was born.

Within weeks of the poster's 1944 release, Hammatt knew he had a hit when large requests for Smokey Bear materials came rolling in.

The Forest Service and Madison Avenue

In 2007 Fire Prevention Program Manager Helene Cleveland, a group of state foresters, and other Forest Service officials listened intently as Draftfcb's Scott Murray presented his ideas for a new Smokey public service ad (PSA), including the same Smokey statue spot that would later draw such a negative response from Nina DiSesa. Murray was new to the Smokey account, as was Cleveland. He worked in Irvine, California, she in Washington D.C. But more than distance separated the two.

Cleveland, in the tradition established by Gifford Pinchot, had entered the Forest Service in 1981 as a forester working in Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest. She became an expert in both forestry and fire management, battling blazes in forests, grasslands, swamps, and peat bogs. She understood the smoldering threat of a dry peat moss bog, but she knew nothing about how advertising was created. Murray, on the other hand, knew how to weave elements of popular culture into successful ads, but he had only limited knowledge of the forests. That became quickly evident to Cleveland when he constantly referred to Smokey as a grizzly bear. He later recalled that, after he had ended his pitch, Cleveland said, "We have a lot of issues here, but the first one is Smokey is not a grizzly bear. He's a black bear."

Everyone cared about creating the right Smokey message, but Cleveland and Murray brought different experiences to the table. In Cleveland's world, having Smokey communicate the right message was critical. To Murray, what mattered was whether the PSA moved the audience or not.

After his statue idea bombed in New York, Murray headed back to Irvine. With less than a month to come up with another Smokey spot, he was back to

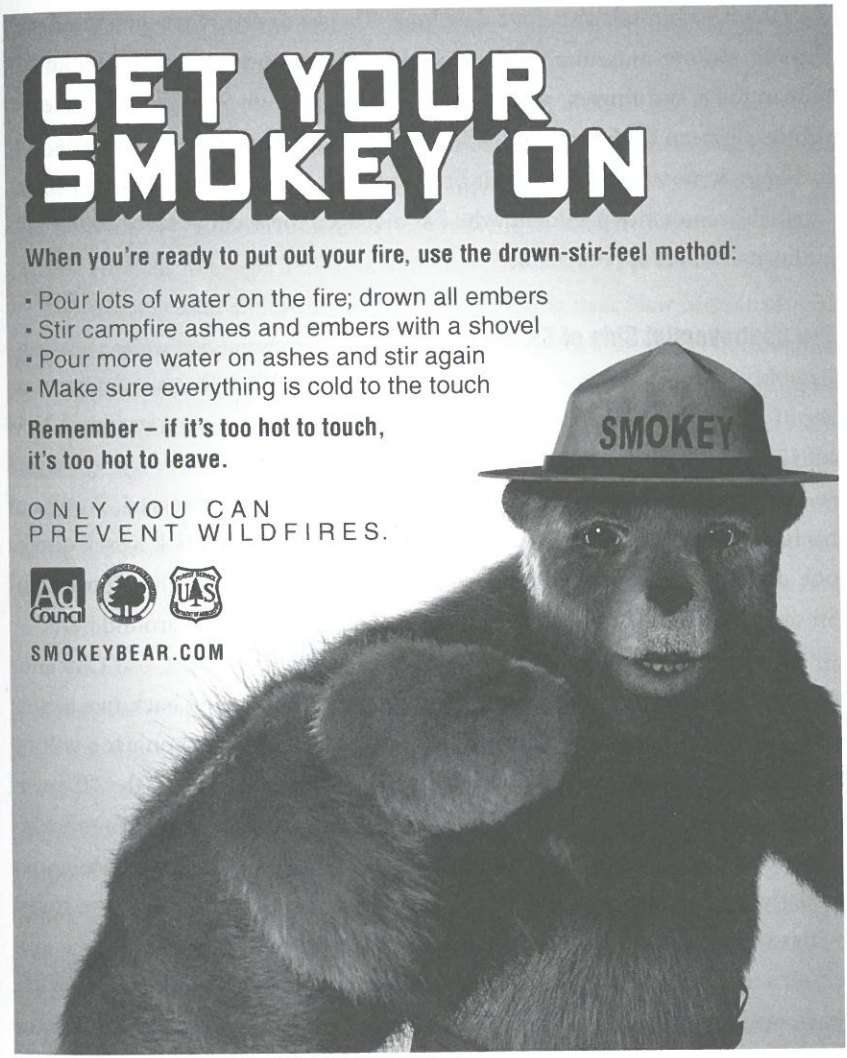
square one. The research showed that people started nine out of ten wildfires, with campfires being one of the top three causes of the problem, according to Cleveland. Cigarettes, parking heated cars too close to dry brush, starting terrain vehicles in the wilderness where a spark could ignite, and burning trash in the backyard also played roles.

How could Smokey best communicate the complicated issues involved given the time limits imposed by a TV commercial? There were other special considerations as well. The Smokey Bear Act of 1952 had given control of Smokey and any revenue generated through the marketing of his image to the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service. The revenue goes into a fire prevention fund, which can only be used for that purpose. What Smokey can say is carefully controlled. His well-known slogan had changed from "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires" to "Only You Can Prevent Wildfires" in 2001.

Murray asked his creative partner Dan Neri: "What would happen if people turned into Smokey?" Advertising concepts always reflect a core idea. The best in the business know that the simplest concepts usually work most effectively. The idea here would be: step into Smokey's shoes. The "Get Your Smokey On" campaign would show people morphing into Smokey as they instructed people to pick up their cigarette butts, not to leave a smoldering camp or bonfire, and to watch how they burn debris in their backyard. "We [were] asking people to become advocates, and the second you take on that role, you become Smokey," Murray explains.

Murray knew from his Campaign Review Committee experience that a single idea wasn't enough. So another—"Let's Put Smokey Back on the A-list"—featured the bear hanging out with George Clooney and Brad Pitt at a diner, or trying on jeans with Cameron Diaz. The slogan was, "Times have changed, but his message hasn't."

Back at the Ad Council in New York that September, Murray opened with the "Get Your Smokey On" pitch. Thirty seconds in, DiSesa said, "I love this." Ditto for the celebrity idea. The review committee argued about which campaign should move forward. Both got a green light, but "Get Your Smokey On" later won out when it became too difficult to secure the celebrities needed to put Smokey back on the A-list. Meanwhile, Cleveland and her team also liked Murray's revised ideas. "We always figured Smokey was on the A-list," she later said in a statement.



An updated, more muscular Smokey in the 2008 "Get Your Smokey On" campaign appeals to a younger generation. (Smokey Bear image used with the permission of the USDA Forest Service.)

The bear himself also got a new look. Thanks to computer-generated animation, a more muscular, less cartoonish Smokey emerged with lifelike fur, human teeth and fingers, and updated jeans. Although Smokey is targeted at people eighteen to thirty-four, children are likely to see his commercials. "He had to look more like a black bear but not terrify children," says Hilary Hamer, Draftfcb's senior vice president, who has managed the account since 2004. "He's authoritative, yet approachable."

The Controversial Side of Smokey's Message

Everybody loves Smokey, or so Jake Kosek thought. When the associate professor of geography at the University of California at Berkeley interviewed New Mexican residents for his 2006 book, *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico*, a frightening picture of the bear emerged. Posters of his image were found in the forest full of bullet holes. In his book Kosek quotes one district ranger of the Carson National Forest who said that "posters of Smokey have more bullet holes in them than any sign we post around here."

In the forests of northern New Mexico, American Indians and Chicanos retained bitter feelings over contested land claims that dated back five centuries. To them, Smokey was a bitter symbol of a U.S. government only too willing to give away land to robber barons such as William A. Clark (the "Copper King") and J. P. Morgan, but to take it from Indians and Latinos with more legitimate claims. Kosek's chief argument was that "racialized nationalist histories underlying the Smokey Bear campaign have infused the bear and the forest with exclusionary formations of U.S. nationalism and, together with the acquisition and misuse of forest lands by the Forest Service in northern New Mexico, have made Smokey more of a symbol of conquest than a benevolent protector of public forests."[62]

To people whose livelihood and existence depended on the forests, a fire prevention message was a threat. In northern New Mexico it was a common practice to burn areas of the forest so that sheep might graze, but Smokey's message urged the prevention of all forest fires. As Kosek recounts, one Forest Service supervisor wrote to his superior, "I am reducing the distribution of the war posters due to negative reaction to them on the part of the local people." The supervisor went on to say, "The fire prevention posters have made people feel like they are being accused of aiding the enemy." He recommended that

"we do a more intensive education campaign before actively enforcing fire prevention in the area."[63]

By enforcing fire prevention, the government would take control of the region's natural resources away from the inhabitants. The greater national good would be imposed on local residents, prompting conflict between Smokey as a government representative and the people living in or near the forests who disagreed with his message. Tensions were inevitable.

Of even greater significance to the people living near New Mexico's forests was the notion that Smokey protected the forests to further the economic interests of others. Saving lumber to fight a war was one thing. But protecting the forests for America's timber manufacturers was a different matter. Smokey's message protected the manufacturers, who were allowed to cut trees in the forests, but excluded the grazers, hunters, and farmers who had a long history of using fire to further their own interests. The needs of local residents were pitted against larger manufacturing interests deemed vital to strengthening America's economy.

Smokey's message also imposed blame. As Kosek argues in his book, the Smokey campaign reflected the belief, deeply rooted in the history of the Forest Service, that people who set fires in forests were deviants and evildoers. The 1942 Japanese submarine attack only intensified this notion. When the Ad Council started its campaign with the Forest Service, it was the first national effort to protect the nation's forests. The strategy behind the campaign linked protecting lumber with national patriotism. So anyone who ignored the campaign's message was guilty of treason, the word some ad men had wanted to use in the 1943 poster featuring Hitler and Tōjō.[64]

Early messages from the fire prevention campaigns preceding Smokey urged citizens to "Volunteer Now as Forest Fire Watchers" and "Keep a Watchful Eye for Enemy Saboteurs."[65] Such messages only encouraged Americans to distrust people who were different—including the Asians behind the submarine attack, or the Indians and Chicanos who burned areas of forest so their animals might graze. "The boundaries of that patriotism," Kosek writes, "as was made painfully clear throughout the nation at the time through expression in the Japanese American concentration camps, the zoot suit riots, and the Tuskegee Project testing syphilis on African Americans, among many other exclusionary nationalist practices, became manifest in forest fire prevention. The campaign made those

'elements' that had traditionally used forest fires more suspect to their neighbors and unpatriotic collaborators with the enemy."[66]

The ad makers depicted fire as the enemy and linked it with images of the menacing Japanese soldier in the 1942 poster and the scary faces of Hitler and Tōjō in the 1943 poster. As time went on, the embodiment of evil in the message shifted from foreign enemies to any American citizen who was careless with matches.

Smokey's influence on how Americans view their forests remains prevalent today. Although the campaign exacerbated long-standing disagreements about land claims and land usage in specific regions, to the majority of the public Smokey remains a positive iconic image. He has been rebranded and refashioned for the twenty-first century, but his message of taking personal responsibility for the well-being of public parks, forests, and wetlands endures. In recent years, when wildfires have ravaged California and Arizona, Smokey's message, whatever its conflicting or controversial aspects, has served Americans well.