Step Right Up! /But Wait, There’s More!

A Performance Genealogy of the American Pitchman in the 20th Century

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By

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ABSTRACT

Step Right Up! /But Wait, There’s More!

A Performance Genealogy of the American Pitchman in the 20th Century

Master of Arts in Theatre

By

Jason Lloyd Johnson

From carnivals of the early 20th century, up on bally stages, talkers performed with flamboyant style for spellbound audiences using persuasive performance techniques. These skills make up what is commonly called a bally or pitch, a series of steps whereby the talker can gather a crowd, hold their attention by demonstrating a product or attraction, and at precisely the right time the talkers manipulated onlookers into purchasing their admission to the inside, a place filled with the strange and unusual, the sideshow.

Richard Schechner, he asks in his book entitled Performance Studies An Introduction, 2nd edition, asks readers the following question "what is performance?" In answer, he offers the Seven Interlocking Spheres of Performance:

1. to entertain
2. make something that is beautiful
3. make or change identity
4. to make or foster community
5. to heal
6. to teach, persuade, or convince
7. to deal with the sacred and/or the demonic

Talkers and pitchman perform within spheres 1, 3 and 6 and as such can be classified as performances that take place in front of audiences, be they on bally platforms, seaside
boardwalks filled with tourists seeking refuge from hot summers in the big cities, or late-night viewers watching an infomercial. Unlike more traditional genres of theatre performance, these artists represent a category with their own distinctive characteristics that have not been fully researched. As of the writing of my thesis only one dissertation, *American Talkers: The art of the sideshow carnival pitchman and other itinerant showmen and vendors* by Amanda Dargan Zeitlan. Similarly, she breaks down the components of the bally. However, Ms. Zeitlan zeros in on the linguistics and syntax of various oral styles that share similarities emanating from the marketplace as a ground for folk artistry to emerge from. I argue that the canon of American Theatre can be expanded with my research which involves cross disciplinary applications of folklore, theatre and psychology that are embodied in the performance genealogy shared by performers who practice persuasive performance techniques of the bally.

I begin by presenting Richard Schechner’s concept of a performance made up of restored behavior that is “reflexive: referring back to oneself”. I use this style to describe how talkers and pitchmen while performing in front of a crowd, are simultaneously remembering what was taught to them and reinventing through improvisation that is influenced by the onlookers’ reaction to their routine. This restored behavior that talkers and pitchmen remember is a performance genealogy that has been passed down from one generation of talkers to the next and is a part of the Western theatrical canon. Director Herbert Blau directly refers to this when he states “where memory is, … theatre is” (qtd. in Roach 4). By defining what elements make up the bally as a performance of selling along with analysis of audio, still photographs and video sources I lay out how a talker “builds the Tip” (audience) and then “freezes” the Tip (holds their attention), and finally how he manipulates his audience by “turning the Tip” and generating sales.
I examine the performances of talkers and pitchmen who represent their respective artistic styles and show evidence as to why each is following the restored behavior of the bally. I point out how the performance genealogy of talkers and pitchmen influenced each other’s distinct style at Coney Island and Atlantic City, thereby providing supporting evidence of my thesis. Lastly, I present modern talkers, approximating the distinctive form which existed prior to its evolution in North America, and in so doing, provide a perspective from which to highlight the significant contributions originated by sideshow talkers up on bally platforms.
INTRODUCTION

They come in at night; workers who assemble something akin to a small town in what was once an open field. In the predawn hours they form a special place built out of canvas, rope, steel and sweat. The circus has arrived. The sights, sounds, and smells beckon multitudes of townsfolk to enter this circus of nostalgia, where “orators whose silver tongues and pulpit gestures [hold] crowds spellbound” (Midway Eyes Platter Future), in regions across America, between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, and all places in between. For example, "in the Midwest they'd get up and [work] the farm every day of their lives [so] that at harvest time they would have a little extra money in their pocket then they were going to have some fun, going to Carnival” (Allison and Day). Although, this temporary town of canvas exists only for a few days, then is disassembled and is moved either by truck or by rail to its next destination, it is for the local residents a welcome distraction from the ordinary. This is the circus, carnival or fair, a nomadic home to the animals, performers and crew, situated out on the fringes of respectable society.

To state the obvious, doing a bally is selling, and the, “hardest part of making a sale is stopping people, whether they’re wandering by a booth at a carnival or flipping TV channels” (Rose). “There is also at the fair, a performer whose natural environment, [and] by the nature of his art, most particularly represents and belongs to this environment” (Ugoretz 1). This is the Talker or Pitchman. For the throngs of fair goers who stroll the main street of this temporary village, midway between game booths and the main show tent, the Talkers give “the type of oral presentation that is being lost” (Allison and Day). Here "pitchmen practice an artistic genre, a form of cultural expression, which is also performed by griots and guslars, by troubadours and shamans, as well as by rappers and riddlers, preachers and politicians (sic)” (Ugoretz 3). And like the storytellers and shamans, whose job it is to
transport themselves and their audience to other realms, sideshow historian, Todd Robbins insists that they create a sense of wonder and that “there is something special going on in this place, this special place” (Allison and Day). Veteran talker and showman Bobby Reynolds, insists that what he does is "oral packaging. I make it sound so intriguing” (Allison and Day).

Ugoretz notes that in context of where talkers/pitchmen perform, in the periodic and temporary venue, they compete vigorously for attention of the audiences—“survival of the fittest.” Talkers whose, “skills at the fair must be well honed, and those who cannot meet the high standards of performance soon fail and do not return” (Ugoretz 5). It is within this arena where the presentation of the competitors cannot appear too much like a performance or be artificial to the point that the intimacy, although motivated financially, disengages the audience. Ugoretz points out a unique distinction in regard to the style of routines used by Pitchman that are in some ways “more extreme and in other ways subtler than other types of oral performers” (Ugoretz 34-35). The fine line between artificiality and intimacy is tenuous, and the order and syntax of the Talker’s words can be the difference between success, eating, or failure, not eating for these showmen. Speaking on NPR’s “Lost and Found Sound,” Brooks McNamara of the Tulane Drama Review (TDR) points out that “there is a talent to organizing words in a way of a good pitch that an excellent Pitchman has” (Alison and Day).

Similar to actors, “the performance of these artists is oral, the tools of the performer are voice, words, and present physical body” (Ugoretz 4). In the way the Pitchman employs his skills along with heightened gesture and language his talent excels. His skills enable him to “catch the attention of his audience, hold it long enough for them to hear the pitch, and then close the deal” (Ugoretz 42). Sword swallow and former pitchman Fred Call adds that the talker/
pitchman has to create a sense of urgency within his audience, in other words “create this impending feeling of … people have to act now to save money” (Allison and Day).

Brooks McNamara emphasizes that “a good talker never gives his audience time to think; he simply moves from one thing to another so rapidly that he confuses them, he distracts them, and he convinces them to buy his product.” If the talker is successful, “the appreciation for this type of performance may be expressed by laughter or even applause, but for the performer, the only really valuable appreciation is when the audience hands over some money” (Ugoretz 42).

Where do these talkers and pitchmen learn their craft and hone their skills? The same way an apprentice learns from a master craftsman, “the skills and techniques involved in oral performance art are taught, although this teaching frequently occurs in ways that are not codified and textualized" states Ugoretz. He continues with his line of logic with "performers instruct performers, and this often happens with a great deal of precision and developed pedagogical effort, even [or especially] when it takes place outside established academic settings" (23). The handing down to the next generation of up-and-coming pitchmen is what Fred Call means when stating that, “a lot of my talking style comes pretty much out of Bobby Reynolds” (Allison and Day). Call admits to his procurement of Reynolds’ panache. Fred Call consciously uses the restored behavior from Reynolds.

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

From carnivals of the early 20th century, up on bally platform stages, the talkers performed with flamboyant style for spellbound audiences using oral artistry, painting word pictures of the exotic attractions that waited inside tents, hidden from view, for those willing to pay an additional charge. At precisely the right time the Talkers manipulated audience members into purchasing their product, entrance to the inside, a place filled with the strange
and unusual, the sideshow.

Was this a theatrical performance? Yes, despite its commercial nature, and appearance of improvisation the talker/audience relationship is synonymous with performance. The talker/pitchman and the observer share space, engaging the other for a brief period of time creating a theatrical event.

Specifically, Richard Schechner, in his book entitled *Performance Studies An Introduction, 2nd edition*, he asks the following question "what is performance?" In answer, he offers a list of the *Seven Interlocking Spheres of Performance*:

1. to entertain
2. make something that is beautiful
3. make or change identity
4. to make or foster community
5. to heal
6. to teach, persuade, or convince
7. to deal with the sacred and/or the demonic (46).

Although Schechner mentions that they are listed in no specific order of significance, “few if any performances accomplish all of these functions, many performances emphasize more than one" (46). These spheres of performance, specifically points one and six, are the underlying foundations of the Bally.

My research involves cross disciplinary applications of folklore, theatre and anthropological linguistics and psychology. Furthermore, I ask the question can product demonstrators and infomercial hosts be a part of a performance genealogy which originated from the sideshow talkers. Writing in *Environmental Theater*, Richard Schechner verifies the theatrical event as a series of three primary transactions, with the third occurring “between the performers and spectators” (XXIV). Unlike more traditional genres of theatrical performance,
these artists using bombastic oratory combined with heightened gesture, represent a category of their own with distinctive characteristics not formerly fully researched by scholars.

As of the writing of my paper only one dissertation on this topic has been found, *American Talkers: The art of the sideshow carnival pitchman and other itinerant showmen and vendors* by Amanda Dargan Zeitlan. Similarly, she breaks down the components of the bally. However, Ms. Zeitlan zeros in on the linguistics and syntax of various oral styles that share similarities emanating from the marketplace as a ground for folk artistry to emerge from rather than performance within a theatrical event. Therefore, I shall analyze the persuasive performance techniques and strategies developed by talkers and apply this template to contemporary pitchmen in order to prove that the paths of the pitchmen and talkers must have intertwined and influenced each other’s style. This will enable me to establish a historical performance lineage of the bally in the 20th century to contemporary infomercial salesman approaches.

**METHODOLOGY OF PERFORMATIVE RESEARCH**

In this thesis I rely on and report by first presenting Richard Schechner’s concept of a performance being made up of *Restored Behavior* that is “reflexive: referring back to oneself” (Performance Studies 28). For example, if a young talker learns the persuasive performance techniques from an older talker, including gestures and vocal nuances, he is engaging his memory of what he learned while adding personal flourishes. He remembers and reinvents simultaneously while making adjustments based on how his performance is engaging his audience. His restored behavior is “living behavior treated as a film director treats a strip of film” that “can be rearranged or reconstructed” (Between Theater and
Once restored behavior can be established as the lens for my research, the elements of this behavior can then be applied to the pieces that go into a talkers/Pitchman's persuasive performance techniques, ever-changing and evolving from audience to audience. Establishing how each talker’s bally is presented, I can point out how the Talker is always conscious of what he or she is doing in terms of gesture, voice, costume, knowing just when to turn his performance audience into paying customers.

By defining what elements make up the bally as persuasive performance techniques of selling along with analysis of audio, still photographs and video sources I will lay out how a talker “builds the Tip” (audience) and then “freezes” the Tip (holds their attention), and finally how he manipulates his audience by “turning the Tip” and generates his revenue sources. Continuing on, I will discuss the psychological aspects involved in performing a bally through the use of strategies and physical gestures that are used to sell their product to an audience. By using biographical and interview sources both in print and on video, these elements will be examined for their effectiveness to engage audiences and affect Talkers/Pitchmen’s income.

After the foundation has been presented and analyzed, I shall trace its evolution from the bally platforms at carnivals expanding into contemporary product demonstration, and then morphing into the infomercials proliferating on cable television channels late into the night. I will discuss how the bally is a template that is used by talkers and modern pitchmen, I will review sources various media performances. Sources from journal articles,
still photographs and videoed pitchmen in action are employed in this section. In addition, in order to show the migration and importance of performing the bally on the fringes of society, and arriving ultimately as a modern pop-culture status holder. Lastly, I will present first-hand evidence of such as Japanese talkers representational of American pitchmen without the use of the bally, although establishing genealogical continuity.

JUSTIFICATION

This thesis is important in that it may be one of a few scholarly works to discuss the bally as part of performance studies. It crosses multiple disciplines of Theatre, Psychology and Anthropology. Also, as many of the carnival and sideshow talkers are passing away, the bally as practiced in front of sideshow tents is becoming a vanishing art form from the cultural landscape of America. The Talkers would vary in pitch and tempo their spiels based on audience reaction. Richard Schechner in his Performance Studies states specifically that “theater is the specific set of gestures performed by the performers in any given performance; the performance is the whole event, including audience and performers” (87). Today, few, if any of the remaining carnivals employ Talkers to promote sideshows, opting instead for recorded versions that cannot interact with an audience.

To prove my contentions, my focus for this thesis is on three important figures whose careers as talkers/pitchman span the breadth of the 20th century. Each one of them stands as figurative markers of the performance genealogy of the bally. From circus folk suspected of being “carny trash” to boardwalk product demonstrator, to iconic pop-culture pitchman, these case studies reflect how the bally evolved from the sideshows of yesterday into home flat-screen monitors displaying HD infomercials. I will conclude my thesis with the final part of my research, and provide a link between my subjects, their historical positions within this
field, and the two places where the artistic styles intersected and influenced each other. From the bally platform to the TV, to iconic figure, the Pitchman is first and foremost a showman who presents the mundane as extraordinary, the meager attractions to the exotic “as seen on TV,” all the while earning their income through your cash or credit card purchases of three easy payments.

Even though Talkers and Pitchman are essentially salesmen, when they are in front of a crowd, be it on a circus midway, a booth in Atlantic City, or on a cable shopping network, they are a community of performers drawing on a repertoire that has been handed down from generation to generation. As many of the sideshows are now extinct and their talkers are passing away, it is imperative that scholarship documents their contribution as performers.
It is when an elder talker/pitchman shares his or her knowledge of how to perform a bally that restored behavior is taught to the younger, up-and-coming talker. For example, Richard Schechner writing in *Between Theater and Anthropology*, (see figure 1) talks about the processional evolution of performance. He presents the reader with a four-squared grid, where in the middle of his grid, in the center, where all corners of the quadrant meet. This is where the actor, the talker, rehearsing of an actual event, reaches into indicative sources, the lower left quadrant containing sources imbedded in the past from an actual event and then moves from that event from the past to the lower right quadrant for a restored event/restored
behavior performed in front of an audience. Even though Schechner says on page 39 that "this event will either be historically verifiable, or not" whereas the history of the talkers and how the bally is taught, borrowed, or stolen from talkers/pitchman, it is an amalgamation of various historical events. Each talker may not consciously base their bally routine from “the” original talker; each successive generation still retains the essence of the original bally.

Whereas, in a traditional theatrical performance, the talker/pitchman does not like to lose himself in a trance-like-state, and is always aware of his or her actions, mannerisms, speech, the talker performing restored behavior is maintaining a sense of self reflectiveness and is constantly aware of himself, and how he is performing to his audience and their reactions to him. This give and take, similar to a tango, in that the male—in this case a talker, escorts his partner—the audience, to the music of his voice in order to get them to submit and purchase a ticket or product.

I have organized my analysis of my research of three pitchmen into the following

*Seven Components of a Talker's Performance:*

1.) Voice
2.) Costume
3.) Gesture
4.) Persuasive Performance Technique/Bally
   a. Building the Tip
   b. Freezing the Tip
   c. The Pitch
   d. Turning the Tip
   e. The Jam
5.) Demonstrative
6.) Audience Involvement
7.) Repetitive

BUILD THE TIP
“Ladies and gentlemen watch the dollar, hocus-pocus, Jammy, Sammy, watch the dollar, hockey, walkie, watch the dollar. From the Isle of Malagula, every movement a work of art, move in closer so you can see it, watch the dollar, watch what I do, welcome to Coney Island.”

Bobby Reynolds

As I stated earlier, the midway of a carnival or fair can be compared to an arena, with all the sights, sounds and smells vying for customers’ attention. It is in this cauldron of perceived chaos that "the verbal flourishes and grotesque imagery of the pitch represent the talker’s own assault on the senses, his own form of flash, is when competing for attention on the crowded Carnival midway" (Dargan and Zeitlin 90). At the beginning of his routine or performance, the talker must “build the Tip.” The Tip represents an audience or crowd that must be gathered in sufficient numbers, that can in turn attract others “in serried ranks, the crowd, … begins to form —some close, some on the fringes, to be, if the pitch is successful, drawn in” (Ugoretz 1).

Aided by visual aids such as giant snakes in the daytime or fire in the evening, “the Pitchman must rely on his own powers of suggestion, on rhetoric and art to entice the audience into a tent, paying their money in advance” (Dargan and Zeitlin 90). This is a hybrid performance that is both scripted and unscripted where “Pitchmen rarely compose the central portions of their pitch or bally on their feet, other parts of the pitch, in particular building the Tip and the grind are improvised [and] do employ oral formulaic composition” (Dargan and Zeitlin 68). The talker’s bally is the performance of passed on Restored Behavior.

Once the Talker has gathered together a group of curious strangers, potential paying customers, he now must begin to train his audience to follow his commands. In order to do this

the talker must “motion to them to step in as a group, a sweeping gesture. Doing this three
times, once at each end of the stage, once to the middle” Kolozsy states that by doing this the
talker is giving a command, he has become a figure of authority. He goes on to say that “this is
very important, as you instruct them to step in closer, take a step backwards on the bally
platform” for the crowd will follow directions given to them and that “by forcing people to
listen and obey,
you are psychologically conditioning people to continue to listen and obey, this establishes
a working precedent, you are training people with a subtle Pavlovian technique,
conditioned reflexes.” As the crowd becomes conditioned to the commands of the talker,
he must “keep them amused, so they don’t drift away.” Kolozsy emphasizes that the talker
incorporate some amusement,” a little business, a gag, some bullshit, go ahead, smear it
on” this will increase suspense in addition to drawing in others to join the crowd of
onlookers, for this “builds as people stop and ask … “What are they all looking at?”
(Kolozsy). The talker is quite literally
putting the squeeze on the crowd to get the “assembled masses to crowd in… the tighter the
better.” This packing them in has a two-fold effect on the crowd, one, when the group is
“trapped, with nowhere to go” the Talker can begin his pitch. Secondly, “since the crowd is
trapped by the
people behind them, they will have no choice but to listen to (the) pitch, in full,” again,
this is attributed to Kolozsy.

While the audience is trapped, with more coming in to see why there is a crowd
forming, “humor is an important resource used by pitchmen both in composing and in
improvising upon their spriels” (Dargan and Zeitlin 70). The humor coupled with
exaggeration of “things to the point of disbelief” where the talker can “paint a picture in the
minds of” [the crowd]. Kolozsy even goes so far as to suggest that a talker “make it weird, maybe a little scary, you know scary weird carnie.” For the talker, this must be improvised and playful for both himself and his captive audience. It is important for the talker to keep foremost in his or her mind that “this is a play that is largely improvisational and it’s a documentary about another play that [his] audience can’t afford to miss” (Kolozsy).

FREEZE THE TIP

When a talker has begun gathering and building his Tip, at some point he must lock or freeze his customers in place so he may present a bally. This is a tactic that is employed by the talker and involves making up some form of excuse that he presents to his onlookers, for them to step closer to the bally platform. He may use an example of a fire marshal's use of strict regulations that demand a certain amount of free pathway along the midway any particular carnival. Anything that gets the audience squeeze in his foreword, push forward, locking those in the first few standing rows in front of the bally platform frozen in place.

The talker and pitchman both use this technique. It may be used in combination with gesturing to onlookers to step forward and, as the talker is motioning for them to step forward. Or, the pitchman may simply do it with his voice, commanding the people to step forward due to some made up/ non-existent fire regulation. Again this works psychologically, as passersby will instinctively want to know why are these people gather, what are they watching, what's so interesting here? As the people press forward passersby stop to pay attention, for they are curious. The spheres of building the tip overlaps with freezing the tip. Once the talker decides that enough people have gathered in front of his platform or his booth, the next phase can then begin, the bally or more commonly known as the pitch.
If “the purpose of the bally is to persuade” (Dargan and Zeitlin 53), then situated between “Building the Tip” and “Turning the Tip” lies the actual selling of the sideshow to the gathered crowd, the “Pitch.” This is when the Talker/Performer, atop the bally platform interacts with the audience who, according to Schechner, “is given a special place to watch from” (Environmental Theater 25). Since this is an interactive performance, influenced by both performer and audience, the “space is treated fluidly, changing during the performance” (25). Even though this bally performance is made up of “clearly discernible stages … the structure of the pitch is highly elaborated” (Dargan and Zeitlin 58). Almost ritualistic, this performance “in relation to the audience, the pitch is a poetic form woven into the fabric of the carnival” continues Dargan and Zeitlan (58). This is repeated every time the carnival or fair comes to town.

A special mention must be made in regards to whether or not pitchmen or talkers memorize their spiels. Dargan and Zeitlin point out on page 68, "as a general rule the Pitchman memorized his spiel and gave it with the most minor variations for years." On page 69 Dargan and Zeitlin somewhat contradict themselves when they say, "our experience recording pitches in a variety of situations suggests that Pitchman do very their talks enormously to suit the crowd and the situation on the Bally platform at any given moment." My own research into viewing and listening to various routines suggest that to each and every Talker, their speech or performance varies greatly. Schechner, writing in Environmental Theater, presents an appropriate analogy, that "the text is a map [with] many possible routes; it is also a map that can be redrawn. You push, pull, explore, exploit. You [the performer] decide where you want to go"
Similarly, the oral text, which is a restored behavior can “be rearranged or reconstructed” (*Between Theater and Anthropology* 35).

Dargan and Zeitlin make it clear, when they say that "some Pitchman adapt to their own style a pitch provided for them by the company that supplies their product; others, especially novices, adapt the pitch of a mentor” (68). It is my opinion that not only do pitchmen adapt prewritten ballys, but that they readily steal good working pitches from each other. This is how the restored behavior is transmitted from talker to talker and pitchman to pitchman. This theory is supported by Dargan and Zeitlin, when that "Pitchman and Talkers readily borrow phrases and formulas from one another composing their own distinctive spiel's, and pitches are replete with traditional lines" (70).

When the talker begins his pitch, he is first and foremost a salesman, and as such he will whet the appetite of his audience by providing a sample of what will be found inside the sideshow tent. "As the pitch is made, it is always good to bring out the attractions one at a time and pitch well they do as the crowd is examining them" (Kolozsy). A good talker must now start to slowly reel in his audience, like a fisherman, slowly reeling in his line before he sets the hook, and the fish is caught. How does he accomplish this? By giving his audience "a promise of something that [they] must not miss ... a treat ... A cliffhanger or some unimportant business that creates suspense, it will help hold them during your pitch" (Kolozsy). Kolozsy suggests that you "open the pitch with a hook, something you refreshed periodically by referring to it, for example, on a girl show," the little love is backstage right now getting undressed for their next performance and working to have them come out here for a little free sample ..." Command
people to not miss this, as this is a sight of a lifetime." It is important that the Talker entertains his audience by providing them with "a few good cracks, an explanation or two, and a few promises." Kolozsy points out that the Talker must with enthusiasm strain "credibility a time or two. Promotes skepticism. Make some phony misleading guarantee, bullshit them about the acts, and there, you've made your pitch".

TURN THE TIP

We now come to a very crucial juncture in the talker’s performance on the bally platform. This is when the talker has to turn the tip. That is, convince the audience that it’s now time to be not merely be interested in the sideshow, but motivated to pay the admission fee and go inside. Dargan and Zeitlin state that “the test of the good Talker is his guilt in judging how long to Bally and when to turn the Tip” (50). This is an important component of the Americanized lineage of talkers, they ask for the payment or “close the sale.” And how does the Talker accomplish this turning of the tip? From my research I have discovered that the talker can employ several devices: he can begin to speed up his speech by moving “from the eloquent talking style of the bally into a faster, more rhythmic and repetitious style” (Dargan and Zeitlin 52-53). Secondly, the talker may choose to do a price drop on the admission charge. For example, for the next three minutes, we are putting away the adult admission tickets, and will only be selling half-price child admission tickets. That’s right, all patrons will be admitted into the sideshow for $.50, not four quarters, two quarters! But only for the next three minutes! Go now! The Talker has created a “false” sense of urgency that begins to herd the crowd over towards the ticket seller. This is where the money is earned. For “showmen like Reynolds and Hall know that they are in the sideshow business to make a living and their success is measured by how well they can turn the Tip” (Nickell 75).
THE JAM

Once the tip or audience begins to purchase either a ticket to the sideshow tent, or a product that is being demonstrated, the job of the talker is to force as many people as possible into purchasing. How is this done? In the case of a carnival midway sideshow, "many times, ten-in-one shows would offer a special reduced price admission ticket for a limited time" (Bowman). Potential customers, seeing others beginning to pay admission, are forced into thinking that they must hurry up and get into the admission line before either of a sellout or the reduced ticket price ends. A "sense of panic is artificially created by the bally talker with a reduction in price for only the first few customers in line" (Kolozsy). As customers push forward to ensure their place inside the sideshow tent, the public "literally jams in line to take advantage of the offer. A sort of human feeding frenzy… over a place in line" (Kolozsy). The author goes on to further state that he has personally seen "fistfights over the place in line."

DEMONSTRATIVE

In terms of being demonstrated talker/pitchman must present something, either on the bally stage or pitchman's booth. Something must be shown to the audience that will eventually he purchased by them. Very simply, if there is no presentation, then the talker/pitchman is merely displaying his oratory skills on a soapbox. This is not selling, and the talker’s income may not be affected by the amount of people turned into paying customers, and it's all about making a sale. In the case of the talker on the midway he has sideshow performers come out one at a time and give a mini-show, a preview if you will. This preview or "sample" is
manipulation, used to entice and obtain ticket sales admission sales. The Pitchman must demonstrate the product that he or she presents to the audience that can solve something that would be considered a problem. For example, it may be a knife that never needs sharpening, like the *Ginsu Knife*. Or it may be a new kind of cooking grill rotisserie unit that can be set on the countertop in a small kitchen or in an RV. The pitchman will demonstrate their product’s ease of use. If the audience agrees with the Pitchman that the product is simple to use, and solves a problem, then they can be turned into paying customers.

**AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT**

When it comes to the audience involvement, the talker must be aware of what he says and how he says it and it's a reaction upon his tip. He is constantly monitoring his audience’s reactions and makes adjustments based upon their body language, verbal responses, etc. It is this keen observation combined with mastery of the restored behavior within his performance that enables the Pitchman to turn the Tip at the precise moment and thereby maximize profits. For example, if the Talker tries to turn the Tip too early, it may result in fewer sales or admissions into his sideshow. In other words, if the audience isn't convinced enough about the benefits of that product or preview of the sideshow being presented on the Bally platform, they may not part with their money. Like an orchestra leader, the Talker meticulously gages the playing of the various instruments; i.e. his speech and gesture, how the audience is responding to this, are they nodding in agreement with the question that deserves a positive answer, etc.

Even in the case of an infomercial featuring someone like Ron Popeil or the late Billy
Mays when he appeared on the Home Shopping Networks, studio audiences or viewers calling in to give testimony as to the product’s value, combined with years of experience that allows for editing of the video shoot to manipulate and give the appearance of audience approval in “real time” gives evidence, although manufactured, and helps to instill “social proof” and convince viewers to purchase. In the case of Billy Mays, once the commercials began to air in the evening, they had the computer capability to calculate regional data and to draw statistical analysis on when audience members/viewers called in and made purchases. They can view the data in real time to see if a current marketing campaign is working and selling products.

REPETATIVE

This performance bally is where the talker in giving a sneak preview or when a pitchman is demonstrating a product must be repeated. The reason for this is so that as newer passersby stop to see what is going on the bally platform, or when viewers happen to land on a particular cable channel and catch an infomercial halfway through its run, that they can be assured of watching a full pitch. The bally is continuously being repeated, so as to keep enticing customers. Some commercials and infomercials may run for years and still achieve profitable sales.

An interesting result of constantly repeating infomercials and commercials across millions of television sets across the United States, is the creation of the pitchman celebrity. That figure who becomes well known for their wardrobe, speaking style or unforgettable catchphrases. Ron Popeil and Billy Mays are two that come to mind who made the jump from pitchman to pop-culture icons.
Chapter II

ORIGINS OF THE SIDESHOW

From the birth of the Carnival at the dawn of the 20th century, it experienced growing pains and reflected the changing social landscape of America. The “workweek [was] short and the labor movement pushed for a rise in wages, this meant that people [had] not only some leisure time, but also extra money to spend. And the sideshow showmen were there to give them something to spend it on” (Robbins). Some of these growing pains included the creation of the gasoline engine, which spurred the increase in rides as well as motordrome and speedway entertainments on the midway. Other factors that affected the sideshow included "a number of improvements in prenatal care that decreased the number of babies born with physical abnormalities" according to Robbins. A second and more important change was from a social point of view as "many people started to look upon sideshow freaks as objects of pity. Instead of sideshow stages, many felt that institutions were the best place for these poor people” (Robbins). The age of political correctness had emerged and its influence found a way onto the midway. Bowman poignantly describes this change when he states that “Today's Carnival has now evolved into a large collection of modern riding devices of every possible description.” This increase in low-cost machinery needed more room along the already crowded midway. Carnival and fair owners, in search of more revenue, and prompted by the ever increasing appetite of the public for bigger and faster rides, crammed into the limited space of the midway while pushing out the sideshow stages and tents.” With the demise of the shows, also came the demise of midway talkers and the colorful language that they used to entice the customer to buy a ticket” (Bowman).
ORIGINS OF THE BALLY

Situated along the midway, positioned in front of the sideshow tent, whose inside is hidden from direct view of the passersby, is a raised platform or stage. This is the bally platform. This stage name is the origin of the term ballyhoo, “meaning flamboyant or sensational publicity, comes to us from the midway—the Midway Plaisance of the 1893 World’s Fair” (Nickell 62). The author, describes the exact origin of the phrase and its original usage when the Spieler, as they were then called, used interpreters to summon the Eastern entertainers using a certain Arabic term that has been variously represented” (62). An interpreter named Jean DeKreko, “represented it as Dehalla Hoon, [meaning] come here” (62). When a midway talker was in a hurry to get his performers out on the platform, and his interpreter was nowhere to be seen, he would attempt to pronounce the Arabic phrase, yet, to his “Western ear it sounded like ballyhoo” (62). The term stuck, and ever since midway and carnival showmen or talkers, often shortening the term to”bally, to call the performer’s out front” (62). Calling out of the performers became part of talkers' routine, and Bally began to represent performance of the “free entertainment given outside the sideshow” (63). The mini-show before the show, performed on the bally platform.

Todd Robbins gives more of a detailed origin, still beginning with the 1893 World’s Fair where the American public was first introduced to the giant Ferris Wheel, and also what can be described as Middle Eastern Belly dancing. "W. O. Taylor was the manager of the streets of Cairo Pavilion at the fair … In order to drum up business, he would have some of the Middle Eastern performers come out onto the midway and give a small show” (Robbins). When the performers came out onto the platform they would shout “D’Allah hoon!” which loosely translated means, “for the love of Allah” As Taylor “did not speak their language, so when he
wanted one of these traffic generating performances done he would call out, come out and do one of those ballyhoos.” This phrase stuck and has since meant the “attention-getting spectacle” (Robbins). In other words, the performance gathers a crowd or tip that is used by talkers and pitchman.

THE MIDWAY

For the sideshow, this is where the magic happens, this is home. Situated midway between the main entrance and the circus tent entry is the midway, the nostalgic sights, sounds, smells and tastes that are stored away in the memories of childhood originate from here. Set up in a traditional horseshoe shape, booths for games, food vendors, pitchmen selling various wares, the occasional fun house and various rides, all designed to flow the crowds up and around the main tent. As the young and old strolled past, everyone who works the midway can do some kind of pitching, be the cotton candy salesman, the one who pours pink lemonade or the game spieler, all their energy is directed towards the crowd and their wallets.

TYPES OF SIDESHOWS

As I have recently discussed the origins of the sideshow, their various influences, and their modern day incarnations, it is now the point in my thesis where the author needs to distinguish between the types of sideshows and what each is composed of. Insofar as the sideshow is, as Ward Hall states, "indigenous to the United States" it has been shaped by both countries, those being America and Canada. The reason being, that the circus carnivals and fairs traveled throughout the United States ventured into Canada as part of their tour routes. These tours took the sideshow talkers all across the two countries, and included trips to the beach
towns of Atlantic City and Coney Island. These boardwalks were jumping off points for some of
the Talkers and into pitching products.

Bowman states that "when one remembers the sideshow, possibly the most thought of
show is the "Ten-in-One." And that this "featured multiple stages with different acts arranged in
a circle around the perimeter of the large tent." This type of sideshow goes by another name, that
of ‘string show,’ because the various facts are strung together to make a show" (Robbins). An
interesting note as to a possible source of where the term string show came from is promoted by
Nickell when he says that this type of show is "one with a line of banners along its front" (50).
The banners are pictorial representations, although exaggerated, of the various acts and exhibits
found inside the show tent. The Ten-in-One can be described as a “Midway show that has about ten
attractions, often including freaks, the carny term for human oddities, working acts, such as fire
eaters, and other special exhibits" (Nickell 49-50). Nickell points out that" the quintessential type
of sideshow, often called a freak show, . . . is known in Circus and Carnival parlance as the ten-
in-one . . . was created in 1904 at the Canadian National Exhibition . . . these sideshows can be
of two types, either pit shows or platform shows (52). At the beginning of Tod Browning’s 1932
film entitled *Freaks*, a talker does a bally, (this term will be discussed further in an upcoming
section), before a crowd, enticing them to pay admission into a pit show that showcases human
oddities. Todd Robbins adds that, “the American ten-in-one sideshow has all but vanished.”

The second type of sideshow is called the "Single-O", a show that consists of only one
attraction…"with the decline of the large sideshows in the 1980s, these small shows . . . were
frequently the only sideshows gracing a carnival midway (Nickell 49). This type of sideshow is
"when a single person or object is featured" (Robbins). This too can be presented in either a pit
or platform format. As stated above in the opening scene of Tod Browning's 1932 film
Freaks which begins with a talker describing the oddity, a woman that is part human and part animal. The camera pans across the faces of the assembled audience and captures their visible expressions of fear and revulsion at the sight of the freak in the pit.

The single attraction sideshow described above is what I believe to be the genesis of the modern day infomercial seen on cable television networks and home shopping networks. The talker/pitchman demonstrates the usefulness of the one product to the “astonishment” and “excitement” of the assembled crowd or seated television audience. By using their persuasive performance techniques, the crowd can be turned into paying customers.
CHAPTER III

TALKERS AND PITCHMEN

Now I want to introduce three subjects of my research. They are in the order of their appearance as talkers or pitchmen: Ward Hall, Bobby Reynolds and Ron Popeil. Each one of these Talkers has made an impact on their chosen profession by being, for lack of a better phrase "still alive." As of the time of this writing, all three have not shuffled off their mortal-coil. Although Hall and Popeil are “members of separate occupational groups, they comprise a cluster linked together by historical and stylistic parallels” (Zeitlan 211-212). And these “stylistic parallels” provide a link to what I believe is evidence of cross-pollination that occurred in the boardwalk towns of Coney Island and Atlantic City, New Jersey. It was at these tourist resorts that talkers and pitchmen influenced each other’s profession.

Our first subject of research, Mr. Ward Hall began his career in the circus 70 years ago at the age of 14—sometimes his age is listed as 15, depending on the source. Although he performed various duties such as knife throwing, being shot out of a cannon, he is mostly known for his being a talker of his own sideshows, which he has toured throughout the United States and various countries in Europe. I will, in essence, classify Hall as being a classic sideshow talker, meaning he didn't venture professionally into the art of being a pitchman or product demonstrator.

The second person I have selected for this thesis is Bobby Reynolds. I will classify Reynolds as a hybrid talker-pitchman. He started out as a talker in Coney Island, and ventured back and forth between circus sideshows, as a promoter and talker of his own shows, and a pitchman of products such as pens. In principle, he did both types of Talking Performance.
You will be entertained by John Mia, the World’s Champion Sword Swallower. A man who swallows swords, sabres, bayonets, keyholes, saws, corkscrews, ice picks, screwdrivers, screen doors, springs, stove pokers, curtain rods and close hangers. And swallows a lighted neon tube.
You can actually see the light of the neon shining from within his body, as it penetrates all the way to the pit of his stomach.

Ward Hall--Sword Swallower Pitch

(Ward Hall's “Sword Swallower” pitch from American Talkers: The Art of the Pitchman and was downloaded from iTunes at https://itunes.apple.com/us/album/american-talkers-art-pitchman/id258849068)

The following introduction for iconic sideshow Talker Ward Hall is taken from two interviews he gave to John Robinson’s sideshowworld.com and uploaded March 26, 2011. These interviews are entitled One-On-One with Ward Hall and simply Ward Hall.

Born in 1931, Ward Hall eventually left home at the age of 15 and began a career in the Circus that would span 70 years. Ward’s entrance into the amusement profession came from when he answered a newspaper advertisement for the Daily Brother’s Circus, who were looking for somebody who could eat fire and perform as a magician. He was 15 years old at the time and, “had learned to do a few magic tricks out of a book and to eat fire” (One-On-One with Ward Hall 1). Hall goes on to say that he also worked for Coal Brothers [Railroad] Circus, as a prop boy in 1944. Continuing on in the winter season of 1946 through 1947 he was an indoor showman, along with partner Harry Leonard “Leonardo” who threw knives at him for their act. During that same time Ward also performed magic, ventriloquism and “a novelty music act, and fire” (Ward Hall 1). At the age of 17 Hall worked for Rogers Brothers Circus as their sideshow manager. By 1951 Ward was working with Norman Anderson’s Wallace and Clark as a sideshow manager and also performed in the center ring performing juggling and balancing acts. As Ward states “over the years I’ve learned to do many of the acts of the sideshow in circuses. I never wanted to be in the sideshow, my goal was to become a circus performer” (One-On-One
with Ward Hall 1). But as fate would have it, Ward Hall wanted to be the owner of his own sideshow, so he bought his first show on July 3, 1951 for $1,000.

And for the last 50 years “Ward has worked many circuses and fairs, appeared on stage and in movies and belonged to many organizations that promote the [circus and sideshow] industry (one-on-one with Ward Hall 1). It goes on to say the after over 50 years working in circuses and at state fairs Hall's career high point came in the 1970s and 80s where they “were operating five ten-in-one shows plus grind shows etc.,” By 1981 Ward Hall “had 16 shows touring simultaneously.” Now, sad to say, that Ward Hall’s World of Wonder traveling sideshow is the last of its kind in America.

VOICE

In an interview by Lane Talbert, entitled Ward Hall- The making of a Sideshow Talker and located at this hyperlink (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgJuZ4EiRes), Ward Hall discusses what is needed to become a good Talker. At forty-seven seconds into the video, Ward Hall mentions that it is important for a Talker to have, “a command of the language in which you are speaking.” In other words, a talker or a pitchman must in effect have a large vocabulary from which to rely on in order to paint their word pictures, but also, to become a wordsmith in other words create or invent a word or words if none exists that will aid in their presentation. How you pronounce words and sentences so that audiences understand what the talker is saying is most important. “Words filled with such descriptive adjectives as “alive,” “born to live” and “world’s largest” and “world’s smallest” (Bowman) aid the talker or a pitchman’s voice in grabbing an audience’s attention so he or she may build the Tip. At one minute thirty-five seconds, Hall discusses where he was born and how that played an important part in his career, for, “being that
we were from Nebraska, we had that flat Midwestern accent… So, it lent more to what is considered proper American English.” And then at 2 minutes 30 seconds, Ward supplemented his lack of formal education, when he says “so I think I probably picked up a lot of English just through reading.” In addition, Ward Hall, at 3 minutes 25 seconds into the video mentions that he “listened to the big show announcers.” And it was through this watching and listening and comprehension of the styles of the talkers, they were his teachers, for he at 3 minutes 45 seconds states, “learned the inflections that they would put in.”

Here it must be stated that the talker’s art form is passed down to the younger generations, whether consciously or not either showing and coaching younger talkers to practice and perfect their art, or up-and-comers merely watching and stealing the techniques of elder performers, is how this stylized performance genealogy is passed on. Richard Schechner in his book *Between Theater and Anthropology*, shows a diagram (see figure 1), “restoration of behavior,” which illustrates developing or “emergent performances from the point of view of rehearsal” (38). Starting with number one, “me rehearsing,” I progress lower left into the indicative or actual historical event. Moving on, from the event labeled number 32 position for in the lower right, “restored event.” The restored events are the movements, gestures, talking styles of older talkers. In other words, Ward Hall learned from the generation that came before.

Continuing on with the analysis of the use of voice, I shall be relating to a YouTube video entitled [WardHallWorldofWonders](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02T6yyUAlk) which was uploaded by world of wonders show and was published November 22, 2010. This video shows Ward Hall on a bally stage at a state fair, going through the performative technique of the bally in order to sell tickets to the entrance of his World of Wonders Sideshow. In addition, I shall quote his various phrases in order to show emphasis in his speaking.
Starting off, at 15 seconds into the video Ward’s use of inflection to emphasize that there are “Twelve acts… Alive!” Heavy emphasis on twelve and alive, louder than his normal speech, aided with a microphone, can be heard above the talking crowd that begins to gather in front of the Bally platform. Then at 25 seconds, Hall’s use of adjectives as he introduces sideshow performer Rozita Rodriguez “rough, tough, scaly skin… That grows on the body of this snake.” The adjectives are overly emphasized both in pitch and loudness or volume. Again, this technique is used to grab attention of passersby so that they stop, and the Tip begins to gather.

In what appears to be a form of scansion, the way an actor studying iambic pentameter, Hall emphasizes entire words rather than specific stressed and unstressed syllables in the line. For example at 40 seconds Hall’s “scanning” is evident in “You’re going to see the Queen of kerosene drinking gasoline, like you and I would enjoy an iced tea.” The stressing and unstressing of words in sentences presents itself again at 1 minute 8 seconds into the video when he begins to describe another sideshow performer in his tent, “and then today you’re going to be entertained by the human blockhead, driving nails into his head with a hammer.”

Hall continues describing his performers and their various acts or curiosities in order to sway his audience to part with some money. Although not all of the performers are on the bally platform, some are inside, and as such Hall must point to the various pictorials that are depicting the performers on what is called the banner line. At 1 minute 18 seconds Hall points directly to one of the pictorials while describing what the audience will see for here he discusses one “from Santa Rosa, Costa Rica, Miss Nikki Condor, the only woman in the world alive with four legs, four feet, twenty toes, and she is going to dance for you.” While gesturing to the specific banner painting Hall holds up his forefingers as emphasis while describing Miss Condor’s unique
pitch and his use of pacing to help entice potential customers for example, at one minute thirty-three seconds “a sight to behold is Unique Monique from Hamburg, Germany, secured on that first painting. And ladies and gentlemen, she looks just like that picture. A woman ALIVE, who visibly does not have any head at all. And when you see her today, it is a sight to behold.”

And lastly what I want to emphasize in terms of Ward Hall’s voice used as an instrument to attract and maintain an audience’s attention occurs at 1 minute 53 seconds into the video, “but the strangest of them all is a seventeen-year-old high school girl from Redwing, Minnesota. Her name is Angela Perez. Angela has a normal head, and an absolutely beautiful face. But, that is all that is beautiful and normal about her because, from the neck down to the body that looks like a tarantula spider. It’s not pretty, it’s not nice. When you look at her, it may shock you. But, you’ll never forget the spider girl.” Hall’s emphasis on the word strangest is used to help exaggerate and to sell her oddity. When he gets to the name of the performer, Angela Perez is emphasized as well. He downplayed the word normal and the phrase “absolutely beautiful face” is spoken very plain, very simple. Then he pauses slightly on the beginning of the next sentence, in that first word but is emphasized and the volume is increased. Continuing, he accentuates the rest of the sentence by adding short, quick pauses in between is all that is beautiful and normal about her. Hall does this to verbally “hook” passersby and continue to gather the Tip. His voice deepens to exaggerate tarantula spider. Hall then juxtaposes the weight of "tarantula spider" by sincerely stating that she is “not pretty” and it is “not nice.” In a last effort to draw added suspense for this performer, Angela Perez, the Talker goes on to say, “you’ll never forget the spider girl” as her final tagline before moving onto the next performer to “preview” to the audience or Tip.

COSTUME
In the above mentioned video, Ward Hall is dressed all in white: white slacks, white short cropped formal jacket and tails, and a white vest. Topping the ensemble is a white bow tie and wing-tip collar shirt. This gives a very formal image. [Intribute to little Pete Terhune](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7vTXjt-H2w), a YouTube video that was uploaded on August 9, 2012 by Lane Talbert, again, as a showman-Talker, Ward Hall appears on the bally platform in a sparkling costume, which no doubt adds to building the Tip. Scenes taken from various years of staging his World of Wonders Sideshow, it highlights his use of the costume. Quickly, at 6 seconds and also at 1 minute and 31 seconds, he is wearing black trousers topped off with a red tails jacket that it is accentuated with golden sequined piping, appearing almost military and style, which is accentuated even more with broad padded shoulders, white tuxedo shirt and red bowtie. Under the lights, Hall creates a commanding impression of how the stereotypical circus showman might appear under the tent rather than outside of it. He is his own ringmaster.

At marker 3:16 into the video, it transitions into a slideshow of still photos. Although these are only still photographs, they are still valid and have been analyzed for their performative quality. In this sequence Hall, microphone in hand, is attired in brown slacks, a blue vest, white tuxedo shirt and sporting a white dinner jacket, which appears to be accented with silver piping and sequins. His red bowtie goes well with the matching pocket chief. In the video entitled Ward Hall Sideshow Early 90s uploaded by the user Zamora King, at around 10 seconds into the video Ward appears on a bally platform wearing a white suit white tie black shirt accentuated with a red rose on his lapel. As this performance was during daylight hours, his choice of wearing white was to be highly visible on the platform.
Jeff Krulik’s uploaded video on YouTube entitled Traveling Sideshow: Shocked and Amazed Part 1, as this video takes place in the evening, Hall is pictured wearing a Long-sleeved shirt, possibly khaki in color, but is accentuated with an American flag tie and then framed with his wearing black trousers. This gives the image of height with the black trousers as well as a visually “popping” American flag so he can be seen by his audience. His costume choices vie for attention with the colorful banner line that visually “frame” the bally outside his World of Wonders Sideshow. His appearance is a carefully crafted image that contributes to the nostalgia and spectacle that make up the mise-en-scene of this theatrical event.

GESTURE

Analyzing the video WardHallWorldofWonders, uploaded by WorldofWondersShow on YouTube, my analysis now comes to the Talker’s use of gesture while performing. Although the video begins after Ward Hall has already begun to build his tip, he has draped around his neck a very long and thick snake. With his right hand he holds the microphone and cradles the serpent’s head with the other. The serpent is merely a device to grab the attention of passersby on the midway. A snake is used in the daytime, while fire is used at night to draw a crowd. Children young or old will stop to see a large snake; it is used as a magnet to freeze the Tip.

At around the 33 second mark of the video, Hall begins to point out Rozita’s banner poster on the line for added emphasis. In addition to pointing Ward starting at about 40 seconds into the video turns to his left for a profile, and points out the Queen of Kerosene depicted on the banner line, then turns his head back to the front similar to an actor telling an aside to his audience. His face beams a smile when saying “like you and I would enjoy an iced tea.” He is letting the audience in on a secret, and if you want to find out what that secret is, just pay the
admission price and go inside the sideshow tent. As Hall points out the various acts that are depicted along his banner line, he switches the microphone from hand-to-hand depending upon where the current act is being hyped either on his left or right. Hall always keeping his body open to the audience, so as never to upstage himself when describing his sideshow performers, is aware of his gestures and their potential for maintaining his tip. For example, if he is to emphasize a pictorial that is along stage left, Ward uses his left arm to point while his right hand engaged the microphone. And this position is reversed for indicating a long stage right. When he switches the Microphone, Hall takes his pointing at hand, arm extended, and as he turns full front to his audience, in one fluid movement places the microphone into the extended hand, bringing it closer so as to remain talking without interruption. This allows the now free arm to extend and continues along with a sweeping gesture. Could all his movements are thought out in advance? Are they choreographed like a dance, his movements are fluid and meticulous so that he could build and maintain his tip?

RESTORED BEHAVIOR/BALLY

As stated previously, the performative technique most commonly referred to as the bally, consists of around four major and distinct parts; build the tip, the pitch or opening, turning the tip and finally the jam. This section is the most compelling evidence for there being a genealogy to the restored behavior. It is here where talkers “borrow” or have been taught their persuasive performance technique. Although they are distinct, with each serving a specific purpose, it’s apparent through my analysis that they overlap. For example, the talker can
build the tip using his voice, gestures and an assortment of props or elements that can catch attention from a distance. In Lane Talbert’s video entitled Sideshow Ward Hall on “Building the Tip” at 1 minute 12 seconds Hall is building the Tip, “now ladies and gentlemen if you all gather right here…” He gestures for the passersby and viewing audience to come in closer to the platform. He’s using an associate, performer Pete Tehune, a fire-eating little person to help build the tip for that evening’s performance. Hall continues, "he will light up the torches and show why they call him the hottest man in town.” Ward states that it is a “psychological thing,” when you do something sensational… “to draw the people to you.” In addition, Ward adds that “always, it is important to have pretty girls with you on the bally stage” obviously, Hall uses sex-appeal to draw interest from males passing along the midway. At 2 minutes 10 seconds in, Ward succinctly states that, “to attract attention… the best thing in the daytime is the snake… the best thing at night is fire” (Ward Hall on Building the Tip).

THE PITCH/OPENING

This is the point in which Ward Hall, in the analyzed videos and audios, begins a shift in his bally performance. This is when Hall or another talker would begin to bring out a small sampling of the various acts that will occur inside the sideshow tent, sort of like a small preview for the audience. This occurs not just at the end of building the tip but prior to its completion, for this can also be used to gather other audience members closer to the bally platform. For “the Pitch, the part of the Bally where the acts are hyped, the wonders to be seen inside, often hyperbole, scandalous exaggeration, and misleading half-truths” (Kolozsy), combined with all of the talker’s use of voice and gesture, gather together any remaining passersby into their tip. And
once it has been built, and they are packed in like “sardines,” Hall builds on the audience’s anticipation and curiosity so that the Tip can eventually be turned… into paying customers. Keep in mind that, “as the pitch is made, it is always good to bring out the attractions one at a time and pitch what they do as the crowd is examining them” (Kolozy).

Beginning at 1 minute 28 seconds into Ward Hall on “Building the Tip,” Our talker has already gathered his Tip, and he begins his opening. Appearing with Ward, up on the bally platform, is Pete Tehune, one of the original munchkins in the film the Wizard of Oz. Pete lights his torches, waves them around and proceeds to “eat fire.” This teaser is demonstrated again at 2 minutes 38 seconds into the video, where Ward Hall describes the swords that the sword swallower will gulp down. He allows audience member to pick which sword that will be used. Hall describes it in exaggerated detail as being a, “Knights of Columbus ceremonial lodge sword.” He describes the sword, 27” in length, and that it will be swallowed down to the stomach, all the while the performer is highlighting the various parts of the sword while Hall describes it. However, at three minutes into the video, Hall states that you do not do the trick all the way, for this is where you describe the various acts and what will be seen inside. Hall pitches the show, then continues on with having the bally performers finish their mini-acts, for Texas Tommy the sword swallower, it is time to gulp it down for “over the stomach and past the gums, look out stomach here it comes.”

TURNING THE TIP

Continuing on with the same video mentioned above, at 4 minutes 13 seconds Ward Hall
begins to turn the tip. With an authoritative tone in his voice, Hall tells his audience that it is show time and that they must “line right up. Say how many [tickets].” He continues to manipulate the crowd by instructing them to “look inside the tent…” This is where the crowd, following Ward’s command, begins to purchase tickets. In the video Ward Hall Sideshow Early 90s, at around 10 seconds into the video Ward Hall makes his decision to turn the tip. He very quickly takes command of his audience and then tells him what to do with, “no more outside announcements!” It is important to understand that once the audience or the tip begins to purchase tickets, that the talker must create a sense of urgency, so that more people will push forward to buy tickets. The sense of urgency is twofold; on the one hand it forces those in the crowd who are willing to part with their money, to do so, now. Secondly, it starts to convince “holdouts,” or those still not willing to commit to purchasing, to do so as well. For the stubborn ones, the talker initiates the jam.

THE JAM

Historically, sideshows would offer, Ten-in-one shows for “a special reduced price admission ticket for a limited time. Known to showmen as a jam, this promotion following a bally would allow all patrons into the show for the price of a child’s ticket” (Bowman). In the above referenced video, Hall continues to push his audience by commanding them, that, “it all takes place inside. Line on up! Get your tickets!” The crowd, now more like a herd of sheep, follow their master's voice by taking out wallets and purses and buying their tickets to see what’s on the inside of the sideshow tent. For those audience members wavering or not truly convinced to follow the crowd into the tent, the jam creates, “a sense of panic (that) is artificially created by the bally talker with a reduction in price for only the first few customers in line. The public literally jams in line to take advantage of the offer. Sort of human feeding frenzy” (Kolozy).
Ward Hall demonstrates Cialdini’s hypothesis of Social Evidence, for what is being communicated to the holdouts is clear “look at all the people who have decided to give. It must be the correct thing to do.” In layman’s terms, if other people are rushing to buy their tickets, I don’t want to miss out. Incidentally, the reduced price of admission for the sideshow would not just be for the first few customers in line, but, for rather everyone. Hall, being King of the Sideshows, “would grind until the last ticket was torn” (Kolozy).

DEMONSTRATIVE

When Hall introduces performers to come out onto his bally platform, these mini-acts represent a demonstration or a sampling of what the gathering crowd can expect from inside the sideshow tent. In terms of a pitchman, it is their product which can be demonstrated to an audience, eventually offering to them some kind of solution. For people, being at a carnival or state fair, or walking the aisles of their local Costco, “automatically want to see what’s going on whenever a demonstration, or something that looks like a performance, is about to begin” (Frierson). Ward Hall, much like a fisherman, works his crowd. “You put out the bait and wait for the interest to peak. Then once they are hooked, that’s it—it’s all over from there” (Frierson).

AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT

From the very start of their encounter with a talker such as Ward Hall, the audience becomes involved with the performance. From the very beginning when passersby, curious by what they see on the bally platform, a snake around a man or female in the day and the display of fire eating at night, etc., to stopping to hear the Talker “rapidly spin his verbal web of entrapment, as so the tip doesn’t turn and walk away” (Frierson). A skillful talker such as Ward is keenly aware of what his audience is doing at any given time, for they and pitchman, “do
very their talks enormously to suit the crowd and the situation on the Bally platform at any given moment” (Dargan and Zeitlin 69). If the audience is involved enough, and a sense of urgency is generated, tickets into the sideshow are purchased at a fairly rapid pace.

REPETITIVE

After one crowd has gone into the tent the talker begins again, launching, once more into building his tip. When one talker needs to take a break, another will take his place. This cycle is repeated until the sideshow is closed for that day. It is of little wonder, that old-style talkers were to be replaced by audio recordings of “canned” spiels that were played on a loop. Economics and ease of use were to be the end of many a talker’s career.
Fleas that juggle, jump through hoops, play football, operate a miniature merry-go-round! Tiny little fleas hitched to a chariot, and they actually run a race. But the most predominating feature
of the entire show is little fleas dressed in costume. And they dance to the strings of music. It is without a doubt the most fascinating site the human eye has ever witnessed. Now there is a small admission. We don't apologize for it. It is only $.09.

Bobby Reynolds --Flea Circus Pitch

(Bobby Reynolds’ “Flea Circus” pitch from American Talkers: The Art of the Pitch, and was downloaded from ITunes at https://itunes.apple.com/us/album/american-talkers-art-pitchman/id258849686)

Bobby Reynolds holds a unique position in this thesis research, for he is a hybrid, both a talker and a pitchman. In his long career, he has been a “sideshow talker in the summer and fall, and a pen pitchman during the winter” (Zeitlan 210). He, “is among a dying breed - freak show pitchmen” (Associated Press). The article goes on to say that the “fast-talking entertainer” claims to have operated one of the last two carnival freak shows that toured the country. When as a child, Bobby Reynolds shined shoes at Coney Island and “became entranced with the talkers who attracted customers to the freak shows with their sales pitches” (A.P.). On October 5, 1934, during the Great Depression, Bobby Reynolds was born into what can be described as a dysfunctional family. In his biography The Talker, Reynolds admitted that his "childhood was fucked up" and that due to his father and grandfather being alcoholics, he was destined to follow in the "family tradition." During his mornings he "ate oatmeal and watched [his] parents argue… My parents’ marriage was a nightmare of continuous fighting" (Hassett 10). After the age of ten, his family moved to Atlantic City, where he continued to venture onto the boardwalk absorbing the spoken words and performing styles used by the sideshow talkers. With such a home life, it’s a little wonder that Bobby would escape to a place of comfort, the sideshow. The people he associated
with, the talkers, would eventually shape his career choice as he studied their artistic styles. Reynolds admits that, "all the talkers use the style of the talkers that preceded them" (Hassett 45). He was learning a craft that “developed in Medieval times in small cities and hamlets in Europe” (Hassett 44).

VOICE

In the video TwoFacedManwithBobbyReynolds uploaded August 28, 2014 by Shea Freelove is the first video that I will present for analysis. At the very beginning of this short clip, Bobby Reynolds announces an act in a commanding, yet subtle way. It must be mentioned that this video was shot at his home after his retirement and, and was not performed on a bally platform. At just 4 seconds into the video Reynolds cadence begins to alternate between higher and lower pitch. “The MAN with TWO FACES.” “Ladies and gentlemen when he removes this hood…. You’ll see a site you’ll never forget.” Bobby uses this as a tease for an audience, to get them more interested in entering the sideshow tent.

At 15 seconds into this video Bobby calls out, “Two faces on the one body!” “It’s all done with the art of gurning.” His tone increases when he emphasizes “two faces” it goes down and comes back up again” the one body.” At the second line he talks about the art (voice going up) of (slight dip in his tone) burning (slower paced yet higher tone emphasizes this word that most of the audience, if not all of them, have never heard before). After a brief description of the definition for gurning, Bobby confidently states that his performer “has two faces, he’ll show you on the inside. Positively ALIVE.” Bobby’s use of the almost a singsong cadence to the pitch is obviously a conscious choice that he, as a talker, uses to lure passersby into his sideshow tent.
In the video BobbyReynoldsDollarBillPitch, which was uploaded June 5, 2014 by Shea FreeLove, also on YouTube is the next clip presented for examination in this section. In this video, Bobby describes building a tip on a bally stage. Although the first 14 seconds are used to chitchat with the cameraman and to describe some of the history, the actual pitch or building the tip section begins at marker 15 seconds into this video. At this point Bobby, who is seated in a chair looking quite frail, suddenly energized as he begins his pitch, for he starts to lift himself up, or at least give himself better posture as he begins to “build the tip.” His voice is much higher and animated. This is quite evident in the line “Watch the DOLLAR!” 20 seconds into the video Bobby uses a satire of cliché magical words, “Hocus-pocus, whammy-Sammy” for comedic effect. In looking at this as a reflex reflexive device, Reynolds is obviously poking fun at himself performing this pitch.

At 25 seconds into this video, BobbyReynoldsDollarBillPitch, while saying to his audience as he manipulates the dollar bill, “wrap it around once… Wrap it around twice… Wrap it around three times”, he is coming in effect, performing a metaphor of wrapping the audience’s attention around his finger while they watch him handle the dollar bill.

At: 50 seconds into this video Reynolds purposely stops before he has completed is “magic act” in order to begin his opening and pitch to the audience. He uses the word “freakatorium” to maintain the audience’s interest. He also uses to verbal word pictures to describe freakatorium, “inside this ENCLOSURE!” “Inside this TENT!” “You’re going to see dozens of unusual fascinating people, curiosities, the likes in which no man has ever seen before!”
In a way he is daring his audience to come inside the tent, it is his challenge to them that if they pay the admission price they won’t be disappointed.

The video **TRAVELINGSIDESHOW:SHOCKEDANDAMAZED!** Based on the sideshow journal by 'James Taylor's Shocked and Amazed: On & Off the Midway' and produced for the Travel Channel. Uploaded by KruTube on YouTube. Published on Oct 17, 2012

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9B4zpu1MOF4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9B4zpu1MOF4) is next for analysis.

At 10:28 into the video Bobby Reynolds is seen giving a pitch at a carnival before passersby. Incidentally, this is the same pitch that Joan Nickell wrote about in secrets of the sideshow on page 68.” Frrrreaks, wonders, and curiosities! A panorama of the strange, the weird, the odd, the bizarre, the macabre, and the unusual.” Here Bobby uses overly enunciated adjectives and nouns to grab and hold people's attention. At the very beginning he rolls the "r" or stresses the "r" for elongation and with such volume, that it literally stops people in their tracks as they walk in front of the entrance to his sideshow.

At 45:30 Reynolds belts out "last show! Let's go! It's a continuous show!" The rhyming of the words is another tool he uses to attract people’s attention. Whether or not he was announcing the last sideshow performance of the evening is really of no consequence, because by claiming it's a last show people who may have been doubtful as to whether they should pay the admission price, and then must quickly make up their minds, so as not to miss it. This is an example of what Robert Cialdini writes about in his book Influence, where "the idea of potential loss plays a large role in human decision-making. In fact, people seem to be more motivated by the thought of losing something than by the thought of gaining something of equal value" (Kindle locations 3703 – 3704). By emphasizing, whether truthfully or not, that the sideshow
will be closing and it is the last show, Reynolds uses psychological pressure to motivate potential customers into taking action and part with their money.

GESTURE

This video, TheTwoFacedManwithBobbyReynolds at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEx2cLHWC54, next to be examined for Bobby’s use of gesture. Starting at about 10 seconds, Reynolds uses both hands first his right than his left to emphasize the two-faced man, who was a sideshow performer in one of his shows. When he states his show you one man one face, his right hand is held up Palm turned toward his face any focus is on it with his eyes. When he talks about the second face, the performer displays, Bobby's left hand is raised, palm facing the other Palm. His hands represent the transition of the two faces in the act for added emphasis. In this video when Reynolds exclaims "Two faces on the one body" both hands point their index fingers making the letter one. This gesture emphasizes his speech.

In his Bobby Reynolds Dollar Bill Pitch video, located at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8IHyu5cJw8, Reynolds takes out a dollar bill which he uses in a quick snapping motion to straighten out the bill so it's very clear to his audience that he is holding money. And he is holding it with both hands, only to release his right hand from it, which he then clasped on it many opens up his left hand, the way and magician might emphasize how his hands are empty, for this is done as if it was a magic trick to hold people's attention, while he builds his tip.

At 23 seconds, while Reynolds is saying "wrap around once. Wrap around twice. Wrap around three times" and is rolling the dollar bill around his left finger making a cone out of it. His
actions are mirroring his lines. This is quite an effective use for building the tip, people young or old would be interested in money, so their focus will be his dollar.

Continuing at marker 43 seconds, Reynolds passes the one dollar bill from his right hand to his left hand and at the same time the hand that is free is used to emphasize the hand that opens up as if he's performing magic at that instant. As he is building his Tip Bobby Reynolds the Talker/Pitchman is basically telling a story to his audience. Here "the storyteller is a craftsman, far from the means of mechanical reproduction, his coordination of eye and hand in gesture is that of the artisan, fashioning the raw material of experience "in a solid, useful and unique way" (Read 164).

In the video TravelingSideshow:ShockedandAmazed at 10:28, Reynolds begins his pitch, “Ffrreaks, wonders, and curiosities! A panorama of the strange, the weird, the odd, the bizarre, the macabre, and the unusual” His right hand is held up about shoulder high, and his Palm is spread wide, giving his performance the dramatic "flair". This gesture, almost theatrical in appearance, might have been used in a Shakespeare production circa 19th century. Bobby performs in front of the banner line backdrop, appearing much like the performers depicted, larger-than-life. At 45:30, Reynolds is using his left arm and hand almost like a flag pole, holding it straight up, when he starts shouting "last show! Let's go!" He's waving to passersby to come over to him as gestures them into his sideshow tent, swaying them in. His gesticulation will most likely be seen from many yards away, and in similar fashion to a professional angler, he reels them in.
COSTUME

In terms of costumes used by Reynolds I'm going to be referring to the two still photographs, whereas number one will be Bobby wearing white pants and a number two will be where Reynolds is wearing a safari jacket and a pith helmet. In addition, I will reference the video TravelingSideshow:ShockedandAmazed. This can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9B4zpu1MOF4. In figure 3, Reynolds is wearing
white shoes have, how white slacks, white shirt –– white like a blank canvas. This is then topped with bright red white and blue colors, for example, he's wearing a red white and blue extract jacket, and sporting what appears to be an American flag tie. This appearance is very "over-the-top", for he is dressed to attract attention. Also, he is in some way in competition with the pictorials. As the colors are very bright and vivid on the banner, so is Reynolds appearing in his "American" Stars & Stripes outfit. This is further emphasized by how he holds a microphone with his right hand and at the same time his left hand is extended index and middle finger pointing toward the banner stands in front of.

In figure 4, Reynolds appearing in "classic safari" garb, complete with pith helmet. Is this image meant to convey Reynolds as the brave explorer, who is wandered the globe in search of the strange and the unusual? Again, he is standing in front of a pictorial or banner that depicts various performers from what I assume was his sideshow; a fat lady, man with two faces, a man with incredibly elastic and stretchable skin, and exotic female performer clad in a bikini and even a two-headed smiling baby. Reynolds’ choice of costume appears a bit more subdued. He is clothed in a simple khaki rain coat and scarf that covers up whatever outfit he may have been wearing underneath. However, he is wearing a hat, not just a hat that a brown fedora. This may have been a choice out of comfort, due to the fact that this video was shot at night and the temperature may have been quite cool. However, this clothing option also implies the exotic or mysterious. For example, his hat looks quite similar to an iconic film character played by the actor Harrison Ford; it is very "Indiana Jones-esque." Does Reynolds project this image by accident? I think not. For as every word used in his pitches are carefully crafted, serving a special purpose, and every gesture serving the same, this is a deliberate choice in the construction of his image as the Presenter/Talker/Owner of his sideshow.
BUILD THE TIP

The first and foremost job of a talker or a pitchman is to "catch the attention of his audience, hold it long enough for them to hear the pitch, and then close the deal" (Ugoretz 42). If he or she cannot build an audience/tip, then they will be out of a job. And one way to stimulate an audience's attention is to do something that will "keep them amused, so they don't drift away. A little business, a gag, some bullshit, go ahead, and smear it on. Stall… create suspense…

Build as people stop and ask… "What are they all looking at?"… Get the assembled masses to crowd in… the tighter the better" (Kolozsy). In the building the Tip video, Reynolds acknowledges that he created his own, unique "trick" to grabbing passersby and holding their attention with the use of that dollar bill. It is his unique stamp, combined with his voice and gesture's that are "the verbal flourishes and grotesque imagery of the pitch represent the talkers on assault on the senses, his own form of "flash," his way of competing for attention on the crowded Carnival midway" (Dargan, Amanda and Steven Zeitlin 90). As Bobby demonstrates in the video by waving around the dollar bill, he is catching people's attention. As they would most likely stop to see what he was doing, others begin to see a crowd forming and they would in turn stop to see what was going on. Once Bobby can get people to stop and pay attention, he passersby go "from a strolling crowd, they had been transformed into an audience, with a communal identity and role, and yet each member of the audience remains an individual" (Ugoretz 2). As Reynolds candidly admits to the camera at 1:04, "That was it. That’s how you stopped them [passersby] with a dollar bill. He ends this example of building the tip by stating frankly that, “It’s all bullshit!” As Kolozsy points out,
the talker/pitchman, in order to build and freeze the tip, must be willing to do anything, and must "play it by ear, fly by the seat of your pants. It'll work way better. Just remember, that this is a play that is largely improv and it's a documentary about another play that your audience can't afford to miss".

It's important to note that when a talker is doing his performance technique, the various sections such as; building the tip, freezing the tip, etc. etc. often overlap. For when you're building the tip, once people stop and begin to listen to the talker that overlaps with freezing the tip. For at that moment when they are transformed from individuals walking past to that group called the audience or tip that's when they're frozen. So as Reynolds and other talkers would gain people's attention by a doing, for example his dollar bill hook, he is constantly growing and freezing the tip. This occurs simultaneously. As people gather in front of the sideshow tent, some linger, others may continue on past, the talker understands that this area is expanding, hopefully or contracting, and that “sometimes the space is treated fluidly, changing during the performance” (Environmental Theater 25).

RESTORED BEHAVIOR/ BALLY

If a Talker/Pitchman has done their building and freezing of the Tip in front of their Bally platform correctly, then “by now [they] should have a large well packed crowd, trapped, with nowhere to go, and [they are] ready to begin the pitch” (Kolozsy), and this is done with any and all tools of the Talkers that they have at their disposal. In addition, they have waved the onlookers in as close as possible, for Kolozsy continues with, "since the crowd is trapped by the people behind, they will have no choice but to listen to your pitch, in full. You will lose only from the outer fringes. That is why we try to pack them in tight."

In the video entitled BobbyReynoldsPitchingtheWorld’sSmallestHorse, uploaded by
Shea FreeLove on April 15, 2014 at youtube.com, Reynolds, although reciting the pitch before a video crew, continues undaunted by the lack of a potentially paying audience. Looking directly into the camera, as if it were an old friend, adjusting his volume accordingly so as to promote an intimacy as he describes “Little Charlie Brown” and says “Look down, way down past your knees, that’s where he is.” He points down with his right index finger, and looks down, then back into the camera. His belief in what he is saying adds “credibility” to the wondrous sights that await the viewer/audience member/tip on the inside of the tent. Bobby "must rely in his own powers of suggestion, on rhetoric and art to entice the audience into a tent, paying their money in advance" (Dargan and Zeitlin 90). Bobby promises the audience that "you'll see him, just like I described him". With a watchful eye on his Tip’s reaction to his bally, Reynolds may "exaggerate some things to the point of disbelief. Paint a picture in the minds of [his] prospects (Kolozsy). Although he may exaggerate, puff up his pitch with inflated ballyhoo, Reynolds will "tell them only enough to create intense curiosity… then turn them" (Kolozsy).

TURN THE TIP

Although I present only one instance showing Bobby Reynolds actually turning the Tip, the success for his having done so for over 50+ years as a talker/pitchman is implied. In the videos TravelingSideshow:ShockedandAmazed at 45:45, the viewer sees Bobby waving into his sideshow tent spectators. They are at his ticket counter and reaching for money in order to gain admission to see what’s on the inside. This pitchman is in every way a performer, using "restored behavior [that] can be put on, the way a mask or costume is. Its shape can be seen from the outside and changed" (Between Theater and Anthropology 37). When he was pitching writing pens decades ago, Bobby recalled that he was, “selling about 350 cases of pens a week,
or 3,750 units at a net of $.35 each unit. I netted approximately $1300 a week just from the pens. Not bad money for an ex-shoeshine boy from Jersey City" (Hassett 82). This type of turning the tip or making sales was another skill set that was passed on to him, "In the early 60s I was introduced to hustling pens by Kenny Soble was a friend of Milton Levine, both Coney Island Talkers" (Hassett 82). His virtuosity is not only evident as he “pitches,” it is evident in his tenacity of having done this job successfully for so many years. "You can't be afraid to talk in front of people. You have to be aggressive and be able to close. There are lots of people who can make the pitch, then you have to know just when to push for the sale. You have to be able to close" (Ugoretz 43). For this was "something that had to be sensed, a kind of intuitive performative skill" (Ugoretz 40).

THE JAM

Also, in TravelingSideshow video, in fact, at the same position in the video 45:45 the camera views Reynolds Shouting “Last Show!” and “Let’s go!” This is a simple jam to get as many people as possible into his tent to see his performers and/or oddities. For those potential customers who remain undecided and see others paying the admission price, a message is being communicated to them by the actions of the others. “The message being communicated to the holdouts is clear: ‘Look at all the people who have decided to give [their money]. It must be the correct thing to do” (Cialdini, Ch. 4).

DEMONSTRATIVE

In the shocked and amazed video, it shows Bobby Reynolds working crowds or building his tip, and then turning them into paying customers, a scene which is obviously demonstrated by
his continual repetition or cycle of building the tip, freezing the tip and turning the tip. In the other videos mentioned above, he reenacts various pitches that were used to persuade potential customers. By its very nature a bally is a demonstration of both a product or sneak preview of sideshow performers simultaneously, and a demonstration of restored behaviors. The persuasive performance techniques are passed on from one generation of talkers to the next.

AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT

The videos that were shot of Bobby Reynolds at his home are occasionally narrated or verbally interrupted by the person or persons doing the filming. Shea Freelove is most likely the person who is asking questions of Bobby and providing comments. By itself, videos are involving the immediate audience, the videographer. By posting or uploading videos to YouTube.com audiences may not be directly involved, because the video has taken place in the past, they still can be engaging for the viewers and those being viewed. The Shocked and Amazed video clearly shows onlookers stopping to watch Reynold’s bally, and when they begin to reach for their wallets, and are most certainly are engaged.

REPETATIVE

Reynolds, with over 50+ years as a talker pitchman is in essence “living proof” that his Bally’s have been able to be repeated, time and time again. If "a talker will take a tried-and-true pitch and mold it to his personality" (Hassett 46), then he will continue to use it. Also, by its very form, a video can be replayed similarly, the way in which a Bally can be repeated and is restored behavior.
RISE OF THE INFOMERCIAL

By the 1980s television pitchmen were seen on a regular basis, some so much that they became celebrities. However, their pitches were regulated by the U.S. Federal government to formats of 15, 30 and 60 second commercials. This restriction would soon be loosened and a proliferation of cable channels meant opportunities for product marketers to pitch their favorite talkers and new-fangled gadgets were to be thrust at consumers, away from the County Fairs and Midways, and within the comfort of their homes. Then "President Ronald Reagan opened the door to the infomercial in 1983, when he deregulated the amount of time networks allowed for TV commercials" (Leonard). Suddenly, commercial air buyers were allowed to purchase low-cost time on the brave new world of cable television stations looking to earn higher profits by offering larger blocks of advertising time. This allowed the small format commercials to be expanded and "from an estimated $10 million in sales in 1984, the infomercial industry grew to more than $1 billion in sales in 1994. It did not take long for the hour-long programs to evolve into 24-hour-a-day network" (Parsons 531). One pitchman, already made famous for pitching his self-made inventions to the public, was Ron Popeil. He was at the forefront of the infomercial tidal wave that swept across the television landscape.
For all the work it does, this machine should sell for over $400 dollars! You know you’re not going to spend $400 dollars for it: not $375, or $350, not $325 or even $300, not $275, or $250, not $225 or even $200 dollars like you all may be thinking, Not $190 or even $180. All you spend for this fabulous machine, an over $400 dollar value. All you spend is just four easy monthly payments of $39.95!

Ron Popeil—Price Guessing Pitch

The man who would take the art of the pitchman from the county fairs and tradeshows and into the home of the American family was born Ronald M. "Ron" Popeil on May 3, 1935. He can best be described as the “Father of the Infomercial,” who elevated his bally style into pop- culture. He descends from a lineage of professional pitchman. Although there is no
apparent evidence of Popeil descending from an actual sideshow talker, his style of pitching is
the quintessential ballyhoo employed by those used on traditional Bally platforms.

Popeil, known for his “direct response marketing company Ronco, and the many
inventions that he sold to the American public, from his fifteen second commercials that grew in
the 1980s to thirty minute infomercials. One of his most memorable infomercials was for his
Showtime Rotisserie ("Set it, and forget it!") and for using the phrase, "But wait, there's more!"
on television as early as the mid-1950s” (Ron Popeil). He elevated the lowly commercial into
what appeared to mimic talk shows, complete with fancy kitchen sets, topped with featured home
gadgets all in various stages of mixing, grilling or pasta pushing to the “oohs and aahs” of an
enthusiastic in-studio audience. His appearances on the tube were so frequent that he, himself
became a celebrity, and was even parodied on Saturday Night Live in a sketch comedy piece
entitled Bass-O-Matic portrayed by comedian Dan Aykroyd (To view a video, click on the
following hyperlink http://www.hulu.com/watch/19046 ). Interesting to note that "he said he
loved Dan Aykroyd's Bass-O-Matic parody" (Dretzka). Also, Ron’s” head” made an appearance
on the animated series Futurama (A wiki page describing the episode is available at

VOICE

At 6 minutes, Ron enthusiastically begins to describe what his machine can do. For
example, as he describes that this new and improved and larger rotisserie unit can cook up to “six
salmon steaks,” the product is shown cooking 6 salmon steaks. Ron goes on to tell the audience
and host how he likes to eat salmon steaks, and in a technique to create agreement in audience
members Popeil tells how he is a fisherman, and how his unit can cook all the fish he might catch.
Further along at marker 6 minutes 10 seconds in, Popeil moves on to another machine of his a similar rotisserie unit cooking baby back ribs and as the camera zooms in to watch the ribs being cooked on this rotisserie unit, Popeil exclaims to the host “baby back ribs are great if you are on this high-protein diet”.

Marker 7 minutes into this video, Ron walks up to another product and this time he points out kebabs, chicken kebabs, self-turning, inside the unit. Again, with enthusiasm, Popeil asks the host “when you think of that Steve?” And his responses “that’s amazing!” Ron repeats the host’s comment with “isn’t that amazing?” For added emphasis, Popeil then turns toward the audience and is nodding his head. The camera pans across the studio audience as they enthusiastically applaud Popeil’s comment, their heads nodding in agreement.

At 7:45 seconds into this infomercial, Popeil gestures in a circle around an empty unit while exclaiming that the “total wattage is only 1250”… “That’s less than most hairdryers”. By 8:10 Popeil quickly rattles off the attributes of another one of his units, “whole fish!” Popeil continues with enthusiasm, “Now, if you’re a hunter, fisherman, backpacker, or camper… This product is for you.

COSTUME

At 4 minutes 18 seconds the infomercial host introduces Ron Popeil, the inventor and Pitchman for the product. Ron is attired in slacks and a light blue shirt and tie and what can be considered his real costume, a green apron with Ronco, the name of his company, on the front in white lettering.
GESTURE

After the host comments that Ron Popeil he looks fabulous because he has lost weight, Ron puts his hands on his hips spins around for the audience can see and proudly states that he has lost 15 pounds in 30 days following this special high protein low carb diet and using his product the rotisserie and barbecue. Here, Ron is using social proof to promote the product.

Ron’s use of his hands allows him to be viewed as open in his body language. For example his hands are up any gestures outwards towards the audience. In addition, when trying to relate to the host of the “program”, he uses his left hand that engages the "host" with gestures for him to be involved in this dialogue.

BUILDING THE TIP

For an infomercial or a home shopping program, it can be assumed that the viewers have stopped channel surfing and have decided to stay on that particular program then the tip is already being built. However, any pitchman or host will still be required to maintain and develop audience interest in the featured product. Various shots of the unit cooking savory food effectively adds to the audience being built up.

RESTORED BEHAVIOR
At around 8 minutes 45 seconds into this video, Popeil has already been building the tip, by promoting all of the benefits of his product. Now, the master pitchman begins his opening where the "official" pitch begins. In one area of the set in between at least a dozen of his rotisserie units, Ron casually demonstrates how “easy” his product is to use. He takes a chicken and rubs some spice on it then casually slips it into the unit, puts the end piece on, centers it, and places it into and closes the unit, saying his unique catchphrase that you just “set it and… Forget it”. His audience members echo his statement and forget it. “That’s all you have to do!” Very similar to how a preacher or clergymen might call out to his congregation during his service, eliciting responses in unison.

9:30 seconds, Ron Popeil continues his “demonstration” by first putting on a pair of barbecue gloves, which he says are “included” with their order. He moves to another unit which is had a chicken cooking in it, and quickly, with little effort, removes the chicken and place it on the cutting board. With fluid movement, Popeil removes the chicken from the detachable rotisserie. To emphasize its ease-of-use, Popeil states “it slides off so easy, because these are nonstick rods”. He adds that “people don’t like a mess to clean up”, for extra emphasis. Popeil casually puts the roasted chicken on a plate garnered with leafy green lettuce, sliced papaya, strawberries and bright red tomatoes off the vine. This is obvious to appeal visually to not only the studio audience, but viewers watching from home. Here again, Popeil uses audience involvement as social proof, when he turns to the audience and asks “isn’t that beautiful?” Audience applause signals their overwhelming approval.
At 9 minutes 57 seconds into this infomercial Popeil begins to give yet, again, another demonstration, this time using a pork loin roast. Although this time, Popeil introduces another one of his gadgets, a solid flavor injector, which can place in the center of the loin flavor enhancers. For example, “garlic cloves, cranberries, walnuts, pine nuts, pineapple, black olives, sun-dried tomatoes, fresh herbs and cilantro”. This is an obvious technique to show how a simple roast can become more appealing and flavorful, almost exotic. Ron also demonstrates his injector and how easy it is to use on the pork loin roast. This extra adds value to the deal he is pitching.

Ron then takes the flavor enhanced roast and proceeds to slide it onto the spit rods, slaps on the end wheel to lock it in place and states “It’s so darn easy.” “Anybody can use this… Rotisserie!” He then brings it over to a waiting rotisserie, slides it in, closes the oven door, turns toward the audience, calls out “You set it… (audience responds) and forget it!”

After withdrawing a fully cooked roast from another unit, Ron places it on the cutting board, effortlessly removes the wheel and rods, and begins to slice into the roast as the camera comes in for a close-up. Steam begins to rise from the neat and each slice revealing the colorful injected flavor enhancers and he demonstrated earlier. “Look how beautiful that pork loin roast is with all those injected flavors on the inside” exclaims Ron as he places the slices onto, yet again, a colorful garnished plate.

TURNING THE TIP

At 14:10 Ron’s co-host mentions that “Everyone is going to want this!” He is quick to ask that before people are going to want this larger unit, they are going to want know the price, but first “they are going to know what comes with it.” He is helping Ron to begin his Jam while
including all of the additional “extras” that are included with this unit that is “not available in any store”. This prompts audience members to begin purchasing the rotisserie oven before it sells out. This “potential” for selling out invokes Robert Cialdini’s “scarcity principle” where items “seem more valuable to us when their availability is limited”.

At this point Popeil will begin to list examples of the unit’s convenience: Popeil extolls how the unit is “Really … not that big. As you can see it’s no larger than a toaster oven”, “It’s perfect for a small apartment or a small kitchen”, and “it’s great for an RV”. This has the potential to turn any viewer who might object to making a purchase due to their not having large enough counter space to accommodate the unit’s size into paying customers.

THE JAM

At 14:40 minutes the infomercial changes from the entertaining to business with Ron’s famous price dropping. This is the classic Jam technique used by the Talkers perched upon the Bally stages of yesteryear. This is the point where he deploys “all the tactics he’d used on the live pitch circuit years earlier” (Stern). Popeil’s price-dropping is used to “turn” his at-home audience members from mere observers into money paying customers. An interesting feature of this technique is that as a viewer, I found myself watching with anticipation and wonder as to what will be the final price of the rotisserie unit. I shall use the metaphor of a roulette wheel, spinning, waiting for the ball to find its final position. Popeil confidentially states that for his “fabulous machine. An over $400 value! All for only four easy monthly payments of $39.95”.

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After the price is revealed, Popeil does not pause for potential customers to calculate the actual cost out-of-pocket, for he begins to add on “extra” items to sweeten the incredible deal he is offering. He does this with well-honed “sincerity”, for “Popeil knows he’s also selling himself in his infomercials. The product has to work, but no one in TV land is going to buy a $160 appliance -- even in four 'easy' installments of $39.95 -- if they think the salesman is just another dealer in snake oil” (Dretzka). He presents all of the items that are included in this “incredible deal” he is offering. Ron enthusiastically informs viewers, “Look what you are going to get!” Here he begins to reinforce the value by listing what you will get with every machine: the non-stick basket, duel heating tray with lid, an instructional booklet and video “in case you are buying it as a gift for someone,” barbeque gloves, chicken ties, and the solid flavor injector, “if you call now”. His urging for customers to call at that instant or lose the added bonus of the injector, a “$30 value by itself”, a liquid flavor injector, an instruction booklet for those “on a high protein low-card diet”. By listing all the extras in quick succession urgency is created.

Here the items are all displayed along with the rotisserie unit, available to customers for those four easy payments. Popeil adds even more potential value with his catch phrase “But wait….there’s more!” Ron adds more items to those who purchase the unit and “promise to tell just one friend about this deal”, a five-piece surgical steel cutlery set, “a $50 value”. As Remy Stern points out that Popeil “threw in giveaway after giveaway”. Ron convinces his customers with a “passion that is infectious” (“Lessons from the Master 12). Ron’s mentioning that if the viewer “promised to ‘tell a friend’ about the ‘incredible offer’—a classic tactic designed to make the audience feel indebted to him for his act of generosity, which, naturally, they could reciprocate by making a purchase” (Stern).
At 14:30, during the “price-drop” Popeil gestures with his hands, alternating between his left and right at each price drop mentioned. He pauses and looks directly into the camera; an old friend talking to another friend, then begins the gestures again. These rehearsed, yet seemingly natural mannerisms, combined with “his countdown in the final seconds of the show was sales magic” (Stern).

At 17:30 Ron lets his customers know that “if for any reason someone doesn’t like the machine, they can return it for a full refund!” He gestures with both hands waving inward, as if to emphasize that the customer will return the unit to himself, personally. As consolation prize, any customer who returns this incredible value can get to keep the $50 knife set, absolutely “free”. Simultaneously, Ron looks into the faces of his studio audience, further giving evidence on how this master pitchmen can get his audience to be “captivated by every word he utters and everyone in it [the studio audience] becomes part of the sales experience” (“Lessons from the Master 12). The Pitchman, at 17:40 asks the at home viewers to “Please call that [telephone] number. You’ll be glad you did.” His warming words promising satisfaction if viewers just make the call now and their problems would be solved.
Within the entire video, Popeil is constantly demonstrating the “ease-of-use” aspects of his featured product. He is showing the audience and viewers at home how his rotisserie unit is functional and solves their cooking needs.

AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT

From the beginning of this video, reviewers become instantly engaged, because Ron Popeil starts asking them questions that most likely involves an affirmative response. Questions such as, “Do you want to lose weight?” Also, studio audience members are given camera time to share their results losing weight by following the recommended diet and cooking method using the product in question, the Ronco Showtime rotisserie and barbecue. These testimonials use social proof as a technique to seduce viewers into agreeing with the products potential value in their own lives. At around 25 seconds into the video, one testimonial tells how that person, “lost 20 pounds in 30 days, and it didn’t even feel like a diet”. After the dozens of testimonials are given, the studio audience bursts into applause for those who had lost weight. As the camera pans across the clapping audience, many are shown smiling, all due to this product.

At about a minute 50 seconds into the video a member of the production staff is interviewing additional audience members for their testimonials, and he also engages these "willing participants" by asking how easy it was for them to lose weight. The answers given appear to be spontaneous. Additionally, the interviewer follows the testimonials with comments of praise; “You look fabulous!” Nodding in agreement while saying “Yes!” Again, social proof is at work.
At 2 minutes 35 seconds into the video, a teenage girl and boy give additional testimonials, which leads the viewer to believe that this product will be good for not only them, but for their entire family. 4 minutes 35 seconds into the video Ron Popeil asks for a show of hands of how many people that have lost weight following this diet and using his product. Dutifully, audience members raise their hands in unison.

By 18:30, after the jam has been presented, Popeil mentions to the TV Host that the audience is made up of “over 100 people, who want to lose weight and keep it off”. The calculated comment is an effort to make the studio audience seem more authentic, and their positive responses to Ron more genuine. If they appear more like the average person sitting at home in front of their television sets in the late night hours, then they are social proof that this rotisserie oven is worth the price of four easy payments. Is it possible that Popeil’s studio audience could be comparable to the “shills” that were placed in front of the bally platforms and whose job it was to convince townsfolk to part with their money and purchase a ticket for the inside? Of course, “audiences have been successfully manipulated by those who use social evidence, even when that evidence has been openly falsified” (Cialdini).

To further the use of social proof to stimulate sales of the rotisserie unit, Popeil employs “real-life testimonials” from his studio audience as more evidence in his product. A sampling include the following audience members involved in the sales pitch with Ron: “I’ve lost twenty pound in the last thirty days”, “It was wonderful, and so easy to clean up”, “I went from a size 16 to a size 14, and now my 14s are getting loose”, “Between my three children and myself, we
have lost 63 pounds”. Afterwards, the audience erupts into applause. His infomercials were not merely drawn out sales pitches, they were entertaining to viewers who happened to land on that particular station as they were channel surfing. The studio audiences, “accompanied by oohs and aahs… for added effect, [was] part of what made the show so entertaining” (Stern).

REPETITIVE

The very nature of an infomercial is its ability to be presented multiple times per day and on many channels. As viewers watched his many commercials and infomercials, appearing over and over again, “his compelling motto: ‘There’s always some necessity you never knew you needed, but you absolutely can’t live without’” (Roberts 24), repeats as well.
CHAPTER IV
INTERSECTION OF ARTISTIC STYLES

Where did the artistic styles of the Talkers and the Pitchmen intersect and had the opportunity to influence each other? In my research I have discovered that they came together in two locations along the Atlantic coast: Coney Island, New York and Atlantic City, New Jersey. These boardwalk beach towns were magnets for tourists trying to escape the summertime heat of the big city and enjoy spending the day at the beach. Sideshow historian Todd Robbins states that, “It is hard to truly figure out what was where and when in Coney Island, because so much was so very transitory. As far as I know the first Sideshow came to Coney Island in the 1880s” (Robbins). This is further supported by Hassett’s writing that, “Showman, Samuel W. Gumpretz … in 1908 … was made Dreamland's General Manager” (40). Dreamland was a sideshow that Gumpretz organized “under a 40x80 foot tent along Surf Avenue” (Hassett 40). Not only did he create Dreamland, Gumpretz, “convinced the best know Talker in the country, Omar Sani ‘King of the Ballyhoo Spielers to quit the road of carnival life and work the front of the side shows at Dreamland” (Hassett 40). In what could be described as historical foreshadowing of the convergence of Talkers and Pitchmen, “singer Jenny Lind, accompanied by the legendary showman Phineas T. Barnum, became frequent guests at the newly built Coney Island House“(Hassett 38).

The other famous tourist getaway was Atlantic City. With throngs of vacationers and money to spend, “Atlantic City presented the showmanship and carnival atmosphere needed to push wacky gadgets” (Good). Ron Popeil’s great uncle Nathan “Nat” Morris built a financially lucrative business pitching kitchen gadgets while he, “worked the boardwalk and the five-and-
dimes and county fairs up and down the Atlantic coast” (Gladwell). Ron’s father learned from Morris and he in turn taught him. In addition to having, “inherited … the pitching tradition of Nathan Morris” (Gladwell), Ron, “also cut his sales chops here” (Good). He earned his money where the Talkers and Pitchmen all honed their Ballys together in friendly competition.

To further show how the Restored Behavior of the Bally was passed on from one generation to the next I can let the Talkers and Pitchmen explain it in their own words. In the Ward Hall-The Making of a Sideshow Talker video by Lane Talbot located at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgJuZ4EiRes, Hall states the following: At 3:25 “I listened to the big show announcers,” And at 3:45 he states that he “learned the inflections that they would put in.” Bobby Reynolds candidly states that, “we all learned our craft from other Talkers” (Hassett 44). Add to that the statement where Bobby mentions that, "all the Talkers use the style of the Talkers that preceded them" (Hassett 45). The late famous pitchman Billy Mays stated that during his time pitching on the boardwalk of Atlantic City, “If you lasted more than a month, these old pitchmen, they’d call you aside and say, ‘Listen kid, I want to show you something,’” Mays continues with, “these guys, they gave me their lifelong secrets “ (Pitchman Billy Mays Retains a Bit of the Boardwalk).

With some transient talkers making the move into permanent fixtures at sideshows along the boardwalks, it makes a case for some “cross-pollination” or influence between the two performance styles. Zeitlan describes how, “movement between these occupations is also a natural one because the jobs have a similar appeal” (Zeitlan 210). She succinctly sums up the connection with the following:

The practitioners of the art of selling--street criers, auctioneers, pitchmen and talkers--belong to closely related occupations; their artistry has many parallels in
style and strategy, but historical connections exist as well. The jobs require similar skills, enabling persons to move easily between one line of work and another. In the course of their lifetimes, they often move between two or more of these occupations. Further, we also found that many moved into other roles that require similar skills in verbal persuasion: preaching and politics (Zeitlan 208).

An interesting point that needs to be mentioned was unbeknownst to me at the start of my research. my subjects had some connection to each other. First off, I viewed a picture of Ward Hall meeting with Bobby Reynolds, they are on friendly terms. Reynolds mentions in his biography that, “I have known all the great talkers of recent times … Nat Morris” (Hassett 44). Hall knows Reynold, who knew Morris, who taught Sam Popeil, who in turn taught his son Ron. Although they may have different occupations, they are, “linked together by historical and stylistic parallels” (Zeitlan 211-212), as well as close connections.
CHAPTER V
FINDING MODERN PRE-BALLY TALKERS

In order to highlight the importance the “Americanized” influence on the evolution of Talkers, the author needed to find primary sources, those who perform in a manner most similar to the ones whom Bobby Reynolds referred to as having, “developed in Medieval times in small cities, and hamlets in Europe” (Hassett 44). In other words, those who attracted the attention of passersby with “pitches [that] were developed to sell attractions and products” (Hassett 44). However, their pitches needed to be without such a well-developed performance technique or Bally. This would present to the reader a performance analysis of Talkers as similar to those who originated the style in front of such places as the cafes of Feudal times. The author, while on vacation in Japan, witnessed firsthand four examples of Talkers performing in a way that closely resembles the pre-American style. All four instances occurred during July, 2015, within the suburbs of Tokyo, Japan.

The Seven Components of a Talker’s Performance that I used as my template for analyzing the performances of Hall, Reynolds and Popeil will again be used to compare and contrast the differences in these forms. Having done so, this will emphasize the importance of the contributions made by talkers whose performance genealogies developed from the bally platforms.

Due to this author's not being able to speak or read the Japanese language, and not having audio recordings of the speeches that these talkers gave, the analysis of the Seven Components of Performance shall be brief. In addition, the analysis will only concern that which can be seen within the images and with what the author can remember, while viewing the presentations. My
Guide, Kazumi Tsunoda, translated any signage and remembered performances associated with each Talker.

These first two images are of an employee of "Fresh Market," a chain store specializing in pastries and desserts. As I have no record of his speech, I shall move to the second component of performance, that of his use of costume. The talker is wearing black pants and a white long-sleeved shirt, and an open collar. He wears an apron and a cap on his head. This is quite obviously a uniform, which is most relevant in a second photograph that the author took heading in the opposite direction, when the Talker was behind the counter and working with a fellow employee. The fellow employee is wearing the uniform appropriate for the head pastry maker. As people passed by, onlookers would be able to recognize this talker is being an employee of the Fresh
Moving onto the third component, gesture, the Talker is holding a sign consisting of graphics and Japanese lettering, while gesturing with his right arm for passersby to come closer to what he is apparently talking about or indicating, on his side. What I was to learn later through my guide was that the sign describes for onlookers how this particular chain of markets, has been featured in multiple television shows, when on-air hosts highlighted the establishment’s quality and freshness of their red bean cake desserts. By inference, the author can deduce that this style of performance is similar, to the café and store owners dating back to medieval Europe. This Talker
isn't presenting a bally he is highlighting positive attributes, and reviews that this market has garnered. In other words, he does not have to perform persuasive performance techniques such as building the tip, or freezing it, perform a bally, turn his tip or even present a jam, he simply has to show how others enjoy his products. It is apparent that he is attempting "social proof" in order to persuade passersby to stop and become paying customers.

By merely talking to people as they enter and exit this subway station, this Talker simply needs to demonstrate by showing the sign and gesturing for people to read what it has to say. The Talker can then move from component five and on to component six, audience involvement. It's quite apparent that if the Talker can stop someone, and get them to listen to what he has to say and read what he has on his sign, he may be able to convert them into paying customers. Unlike his North American post-bally Talkers, this one does not require payment in advance for goods or services, and as such, no formal Bally is required. Now, moving onto number seven, that is repetitive, he can repeat this multiple times when trains are entering and exiting the station, while there is increased for traffic of people passing by.
The next image the author will focus on is that of a young female Talker employed by McDonald’s Restaurant located at Musashikoganei Station. The author remembers the day well as being around 90 degrees Fahrenheit and about 80% humidity. Again, the author has to rely on memory, for he was unable to record audio and only took still photographs of this Talker’s performance. Although, as the reader can see in this picture, the Talker is holding in her right hand a red plastic megaphone, which is obviously used to amplify her voice over the noise of the city.
Now going into component number two, costume, the employee is dressed in a red McDonald's T-shirt, obviously a uniform for that particular restaurant. She is also wearing what appear to be a skirt and a cap. Continuing on into component three, the Talker gestures by shaking assigned she is holding in her left hand to gain attention, while simultaneously bellowing through the megaphone to attract customers’ attention. Now, as in the café owners of old, she is in front of a restaurant, and her job is to get people from being passersby into becoming patrons.

As with the first Japanese Talker, this one does not need to perform a bally, yet, she does have to somehow gesticulate and shout over the throngs of people and the cityscape in order to get their attention. She does this by what is pictured on her sign that she is holding. Again according to my guide, her sign, again written in kanji, describes their promotion of a medium-sized soft drink and special collector’s glass, all for ¥200, under $2 American. With the temperature and humidity being so high that day, and with what can be seen as many patrons inside the entrance to her restaurant, a cold beverage in a collectible glass would not be a hard sell. With all the people in the background within the restaurant, they are themselves social proof, used to help persuade potential customers to become satisfied paying ones.

This routine can be demonstrated repeatedly, throughout the day. As far audience involvement, if customers stop and ask questions or by their giving into some "impulse shopping" they are obviously engaged with the talker’s performance.
The third image shows a talker not in front of a restaurant or pastry market but, located just in front of Bic Camera and electronics store located at Tachikawa Station during the night of the summer fireworks festival in Tachikawa. With large crowds of people out to catch the fireworks show, this talker was announcing specials going on inside of his electronics store. With regards to the components of performance, this talker's voice was amplified with the aid of a microphone. Again, there is no audio to accompany this picture. However, he is in a "costume" or uniform. His consists of black pants and a white T-shirt that is sleave rolled up and he is wearing a store branded red vest. The author remembers not seeing any gestures by this talker, simply he was speaking on the microphone and as according to what was recollected by my guide, telling of great deals and big savings currently going on for that night of the festival. There does not appear to be any sort of demonstration going on nor is there any real audience.
involvement, or engagement with passersby is remembered by the author. I'm sure that this performance was repeated throughout the evening's festivities.

Later the same evening, near Tachikawa station, and at the entrance to a Kushiaki restaurant, (Yakitori is a form of Kushiaki using grilled chicken.) The author spotted another talker. This one was trying to convince passersby of some late-night dining. His performance, although lacking the complexity of a full bally, can be made up with the enthusiasm he showed. He was sweating profusely, and kept gesturing wildly with his arms for people to enter his establishment, all the time loudly trying to convince would be diners to come inside and try their food, with the aid of a yellow plastic megaphone.

In this example, this Talker employs some of, and not all of the *Seven Components of a Talker’s Performance*. His performance uses: voice, costume, gesture. While he apparently skips the bally portion, he engages potential customers by jumping in front of them to describe menu
items. This performance routine is repeated several times in front of the author.

Again, the aid of Kazumi Tsunoda’s translation skills and memory, aided this author to comprehend and then reconstruct exactly what took place. And to the credit of the enthusiastic Talker, I and my company did, indeed, become willing patrons to his establishment.
CONCLUSION

What originated, centuries ago, a form or oral performance was created when, “the first pitch began in front of cafes [when] the owner would read his menu to a crowd” (Hassett 44). The practice would make its way across the Atlantic and into the cultural landscape of North America. In conclusion, I have presented my thesis, that talkers and pitchman share common artistic styles that classify them as performances. And that these can be studied through the framework of restored behavior and that definitively, in their persuasive performance techniques, these restored behaviors connect the past to the present in a very theatrical way. The bally, the persuasive performance techniques that all talkers and pitchmen employ, is a tradition that has been handed down from one generation to the next. The origin of the bally, as speculated by Bobby Reynolds, developed in medieval times in small cities, and hamlets in Europe” (Hassett 44), was adopted and reinvented in the American Amusement Industry by the creation of the Sideshow. From the 1893 World’s Fair to circus midways, finally ending up at the beach towns and onto their boardwalks. Many decades later, the pitchmen brought them to television in the form of commercials and infomercials with the help of Ron Popeil. The bally is the restored behaviors of talkers from the past, eventually made its way into the homes of people.

I have done so by deconstructing the components that make up the bally, their interlocking units that form the whole pitch. These have been paired with other components, such as: voice, costume, gesture, the ability to be demonstrated in front of an audience that becomes involved with the performance, that make what a talker and the pitchman do more performative. I have discussed the origins of the sideshow bally, and who is credited to for the
creation of that style, PT Barnum. I have also, offered observations of various performances of talkers/pitchmen: Ward Hall, Bobby Reynolds and Ron Popeil, individuals, whom, at the beginning of my research, I had no knowledge that they were familiar with each other. Along the way I discovered that Ward and Bobby have been friends for many years. Also, Reynolds has known “all the great Talkers of recent times … Ward Hall, and [Nathan] Nat Morris” (Hassett 44). It was Morris who “pulled ... his nephew, Seymour Popeil” (Good). Seymour became the father of Ron Popeil. It was through his Father’s tutelage, that Ron learned how to become a top pitchman.

In this thesis I have analyzed the performative techniques used by Ward Hall, Bobby Reynolds and Ron Popeil, each one as examples of employing restored behaviors in their bally. At the outset of my research, I knew that somehow talkers and pitchman were artistically parallel to each other, each with similar styles, similar vocabulary. I discovered that some talkers and pitchmen crossed back and forth between the two styles, in the case of Bobby Reynolds, he was a hybrid; a talker and pitchman. I also discovered that there was evidence for artistic cross pollination and that they must have influenced each other, I discovered where it occurred. Coney island in New York and Atlantic City in New Jersey, these boardwalk tourist attractions, attractive not only to the throngs of tourists escaping the summer heat of the big cities, also, that some talkers crossed over and became full-time pitchman, opting for more stability and less of a vagabond lifestyle of traveling circuses.

In addition, I presented how from the fringes of society, those carny folk that would roll into town's across the country, setting up circus tents and midways, always viewed as the
outsiders, sometimes suspected of trying to rip off the local groups/townsfolk. They evolved into vendors that were plying their trade along the beachfront boardwalks, and with the help of Ron Popeil and eventually the late Billy Mays, the boardwalk pitchman of Coney Island and Atlantic City faded away. Beginning with the deregulation of limitations that were placed on television commercials, these short length format commercials evolved into 15 and 30 minutes infomercials, some complete with studio audiences that gave the image of social proof and approval of whichever product was being pitched. Beginning with the celebrity that was given to Ron Popeil which was parodied by Dan Aykroyd on Saturday Night Live. (The video can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BQFv83QJ2Y). And for many viewers of cable TV home shopping networks, they can view their favorite pitchmen 24 hours a day 7 days a week. These viewers many of them paid customers, can even call them and talk with their favorite pitchman or home shopping hosts, and give testimonials has to bear appreciation of the products they purchased.

They may be salesmen; however, it is in their personalities and performances that a theatrical event can be witnessed, and that these three talkers establish my performance genealogy. Theirs is a lineage based on a repertoire of persuasive performance techniques that evolved from the sideshow bally stages to the infomercials of the 20th century.
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